

England
bonded
esentm

Defective, or
just deaf?

Bryan Appleyard Page 21



Poison pens: the Führer
and the warring writers

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Euro '96: how to
survive football hell

Section Two, Living



THE INDEPENDENT

3,006

THURSDAY 6 JUNE 1996

WEATHER Dry and sunny 40p (UK 45p)

Tories plan sixth-form vouchers

JUDITH JUDD
and FRAN ABRAMS

The Government will next week pave the way for a Conservative election manifesto commitment to introduce vouchers for all 16-to-19-year-olds.

The move will be contained in the competitiveness White Paper, which will propose payment for results for all school sixth forms. This will place sixth forms on the same funding basis as other further education colleges, enabling vouchers to be used across schools and colleges.

The plan is a victory for the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, and for right-wing Conservatives

who want to promote market forces in education. They have out-maneuvered Gillian Shephard, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, who has been resisting the voucher proposals.

Mrs Shephard is worried that plans to fund sixth forms and further education colleges in the same way could force some small sixth forms to close.

Ministers face a conflict between their desire for more competition and their policy of supporting school sixth forms which are academically suc-

cessful but not always economically viable.

But the White Paper to be launched next Thursday by Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, will press ahead with proposals to ensure that school sixth-formers are funded in the same way as further education students.

A report last year said that one of the main obstacles to the introduction of vouchers is cost. The average sixth form course is more expensive than a further education course.

Funding for further education

colleges and sixth form colleges is based partly on exam results but funding for school sixth forms is decided by the number of students they recruit.

The White Paper will propose that sixth form funding should be based in part on successful completion of A-level or vocational courses.

A consultation paper to be published by Mrs Shephard's department will explore the options.

For instance, schools might get more cash for students successfully completing three A-levels than for those

completing only two. Successful GCSE retakes might also attract more funding. Schools would have an incentive to turn away less able sixth formers.

Stephen Byers, a member of Labour's front bench education and employment team, said: "Gillian Shephard is being squeezed between Kenneth Clarke and the Tory right who are in favour of vouchers."

Mrs Shephard is worried that the plan to fund both schools and colleges in the same way might backfire by damaging

school sixth forms, favoured by middle class parents.

In colleges, almost all funding follows the student while in schools only four-fifths does so and there is protection for those with only a few pupils. A recent report by accountants Coopers and Lybrand said a sixth form education cost £3,500 per year while a further education college course cost £3,300.

Ministers tried to introduce vouchers for this age group two years ago, but the scheme stalled after this cost difference was revealed. Now ministers are

going that the sixth form courses cost only slightly more than further education ones if the calculation is based on the proportion of students successfully completing three A-levels.

Schools and colleges reacted with anger to the idea of vouchers last night, saying that they were designed to drive down the cost of education. They also said there was no need to introduce market forces into 16-19 education because competition for students was already fierce.

The real problem was attracting adults, they said.

John Dunford, president of the Secondary Heads' Association, said schools were already responding well to the needs of 16-year-olds.

"This would be a completely unnecessary and retrograde step which would involve a huge bureaucracy. We do not need a voucher system," he said.

Colin Flint, principal of Solihull College and a council member of the Association for Colleges, said he was not against vouchers but they were not needed. "A very hard-nosed market-driven system which was all about outcomes would not be helpful."

Education methods, page 6

Santer and Major go head-to-head

SARAH HELM
DONALD MACINTYRE
and IMRE KARACS

The British Government and the European Commission were in open confrontation last night after a blunt warning from Jacques Santer, the Commission President, that the EU beef ban will remain in force until Britain ends its sabotage.

The sudden escalation in the brinkmanship between the Government and the Commission – on whose support Britain had originally been counting in the beef crisis – appeared to leave the two sides in the most serious stand-off yet, with no obvious or easy resolution in sight.

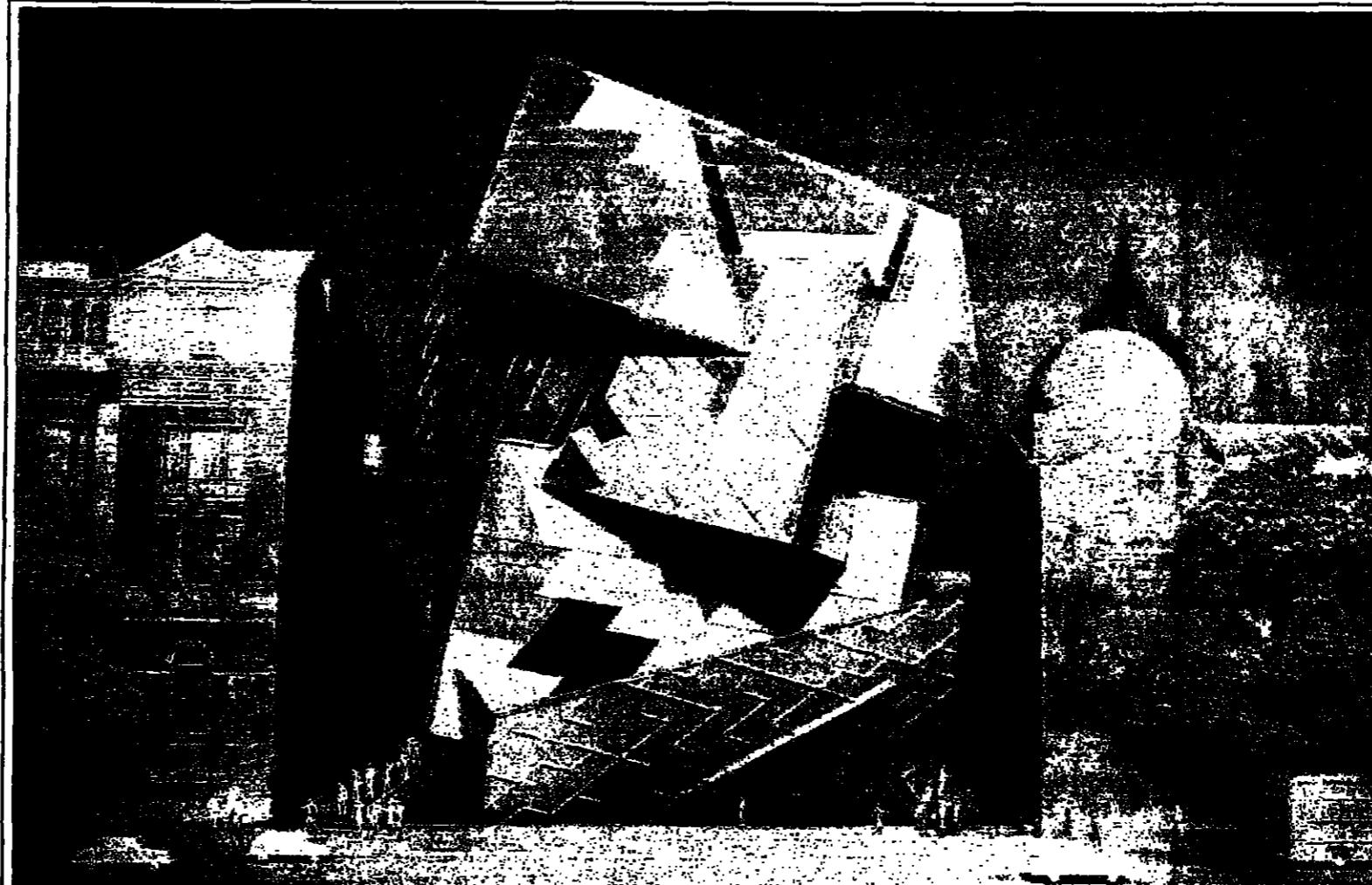
After making it clear that the Commission would fulfil its commitment to lift the ban on gelatine, tallow and semen, Mr Santer went on to say firmly that this was the last time the Com-

mission would come to Britain's aid. While Downing Street insisted the policy of non-co-operation would go ahead, Mr Santer said the Government would receive no framework for ending the rest of the ban while its "absurd" non-co-operation tactics continued. He described the effects of the British tactics as "extremely grave".

"It is the duty of the Commission to launch an appeal to the British authorities to give up this policy and let the European institutions do their work," he said.

Although Mr Santer was speaking only in his capacity as President of the Commission, his words echoed the increasing anger being voiced in European capitals. Mr Santer insisted he was "not at war" and was not seeking "unconditional surrender" from Britain. However, he

TURN TO PAGE 2



In the year 2001 this will be the most admired, reviled and argued over building in Britain. Jonathan Glancey talks to its architect. Page 21

An everyday story of how the Daily Mail digs its dirt – and how to throw it back

By Polly Toynbee

around words about me like "marriage-breaker".

I am puzzled. I try to imagine how you can turn this everyday concatenation of domestic circumstance into a Story. I am glad I do not have to pen the opening lines of this dull tale about a back of little interest to

giant casing the joint. My 11-year-old son was terrified, but even more so when the house actually was broken into that day, for the first time in years. A coincidence, I am sure.

But it is hard to describe the paranoiac this induces. I try to imagine how much worse it would be if I did have a secret hide, especially from children.

In a fit of anxiety I rang a se-

home for me to call him. Colleagues wisely advised me not to do so. But then I decided not to take this like a victim and to hit back first. To stop him writing his story before I can write mine, I called him yesterday morning to say that I would talk to him at great length and in great detail, but not until today. (Fat chance.)

In the background there is the sound of his children having breakfast. He is plainly astounded by my offer.

"I don't like this story at all," he bleats. "I'm going to ask them to put someone else on it." Awfully nice of him. "But I've got four children to feed and they might not let me hand it on." Later, Mr Jones rang a colleague of mine and told him he had asked to be taken off the story. Let's hope his rediscovery of decency does not earn him the sack. We do not know if some other poor blighter has been assigned the "story". But we can assume so.

It's standard *Daily Mail* stuff. Geoffrey Wheatcroft, an ersatz friend, once wrote a damning stinker about me in the *Mail* when I was at the BBC and then had the nerve to write me a cringing letter claiming his copy had been doctored, and anyway, he had a lot of little Wheatcrofts to keep in stock leather. His lack of moral fibre does not seem to have dimmed his ardour for moralising on anything and everything for the *Mail*.

So there it is, the newspaper of family values at its lowest. Why are they so afraid of honest argument with those who have different views? Why can't they come out in the open and debate their beliefs? It is because their view of society is such a mishmash of contradictory hypocrisies, so far removed from most families' complicated experiences. No doubt they will retaliate against me some day. But it is time to stand up to them.



most *Mail* readers. How many divorced, separated or philandering journalists work on the *Mail*, I wonder, idly? But the *Mail* thinks with a few sneaky phone calls a reporter can get to the bottom of these difficult things.

Suddenly I find it frightening. Neighbours are getting calls – some of them people I have never met. On Tuesday a man came over from Number 6, deeply worried by a call from the *Mail* asking detailed questions about what hours he had observed any men coming and going at my house. He suspected it was a bur-

XERYUS ROUGE
POUR HOMME



GIVENCHY

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A Japanese man...likes to write poems about...the delights of Spam

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY

Tokyo

*Spam frying in lard
The whirr of the kitchen fan
Summer of my youth*

For centuries, Japanese men of letters have recorded the passing of the seasons and the pangs of love in *haiku*—tiny, delicate poems of 17 syllables.

For decades, consumers all over the world have enjoyed the cruder pleasures of Spam—that pink, gelatinous pork product. Now, courtesy of the Internet, these two seemingly incongruous forces have been

united in an entirely new literary form. Welcome to the world of "Spamku".

Spamku, quite simply, are *haiku* about Spam, and they are part of a worldwide renaissance in *haiku* which is taking place in cyberspace.

Dozens of *haiku* web sites have sprung up, ranging from serious literary forums in Japanese and English to more outlandish innovations.

These include "Vita" (*haiku* with accompanying video graphics), and "SciFaku" (*haiku* with a science-fiction theme), and even a site devoted

to "humorous" *haiku* about leprosy.

But the most inventive of the lot is the Spam Haiku Archive, set up a year ago by John Nagamachi Cho, a half-Japanese scientist at the Arecibo Observatory in Puerto Rico.

"In the age of MTV attention spans and sound-bite news coverage, most [people] do not have the patience and discipline to channel their creative impulse into a sustained and coherent art form," writes Mr Cho in the *Spamku* manifesto, posted at the site.

"The *haiku* form is, thus,

perfect for our culture. Spam, that mysterious and irresistibly repulsive food product, has

spawned a post-modern, cross-cultural literary form."

Nobody knows who invented

the *Spamku* but, in its 12 months of operation, nearly 4,000 *Spamku* have been posted in the Archive at <http://www.naice.edu/~jcho/spamsha.html>. An average of 10 new poems are added every day. *Spamku*-ists include Japanese, Australians, Germans, Britons and Americans.

All contributions must adhere to the strict *haiku* form—three lines divided into five, seven and five syllables—but they reveal a range of complex attitudes to Spam which belie its seemingly humble status. Some, like the one above, are nostal-

gic memories of Spam past.

Others focus on the poignant, tragic character of Spam:

*Formless, spreadable.
Beneath contempt. Pay me!
I am deviled Spam.*

"For some reason people have this thing about Spam," says Mr Cho. "There's something intrinsically funny about it just saying the word is enough to make people laugh."

Four out of five contributions make fun of Spam, but a minority are simple celebrations.

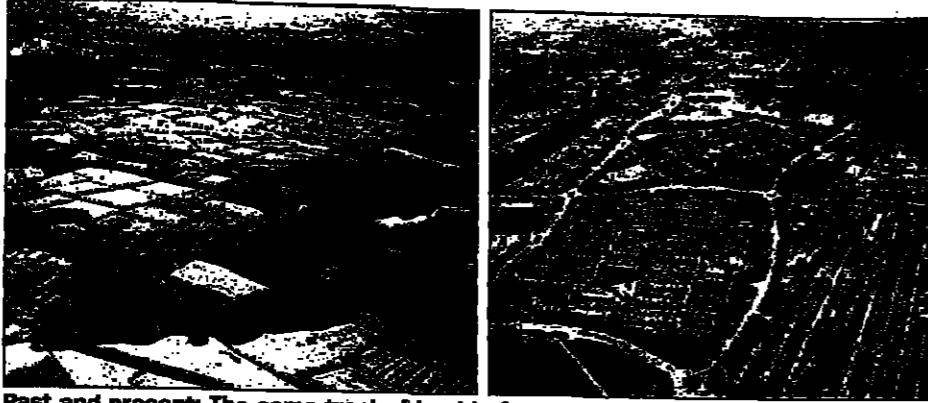
*At three cans of Spam, wrote one American *Spamku*-ist: But there's still room for Jello.*

I love this country!

As a élite and sophisticated newspaper, the *Independent* is keen to further the art and appreciation of *Spamku*. We therefore announce: Britain's first *Spamku* poetry competition. Only proper *Haiku*-form work, offered in a spirit of homage to Spam, will be considered. The runner-up will win a year's supply of pork luncheon meat and the winner will be awarded a week's supply.

Entries should be sent to the *Independent* and marked: Pork Luncheon Meat Poetry Festival.

Housing future: The sceptred isle is also a crowded one. Can room be made for 4.4 million more households?



Past and present: The same tract of land before and after Milton Keynes was built

Home alone: a nightmare for urban planners

CLARE GARNER

The tendency for people to remain single for longer than they used to has been identified as one of the reasons for an unprecedented growth in the number of one-man or one-woman households in Britain.

The Secretary for the Environment, John Gummer, launching a national accommodation debate yesterday, linked the increase in single households and marriage break-ups to record demand for extra housing.

He tried to focus debate on how to supply the 4.4 million new houses his department estimates Britain will need in the next 20 years.

Almost 80 per cent—about 3.5 million—of these homes will be occupied by just one person, according to his department's household projections for the years to 2016.

Mr Gummer told the Royal Town Planning Institute's annual conference in Brighton: "Even if, like me, you deplore

the damage done to family life, and the institution of marriage, you cannot ignore the consequences or hope they will go away."

"All of us need to face them squarely. They mean more homes needed."

"They mean a demand for more space, greater pressure to build in the countryside, to expand the towns to increase density and live more handily for work and play."

He looked forward to a frank discussion about the social and environmental effects of the single way of life. Such a debate should embrace churches, businesses, social organisations, local and national governments, Mr Gummer proposed.

"We need to admit that, in many instances, government's role is not a central factor," he said. "The forces at work are deep-rooted cultural changes which have been evolving for generations. These are susceptible to influence only if the whole society began to feel that a radical new direction were

needed."

The department's projections, published in March last year, are that the number of households in Buckinghamshire and Cambridgeshire will almost double in the next two decades, while the number in Wiltshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire rises to 30 to 40 per cent.

Residents of Hampshire, London, Manchester, and Yorkshire can expect the largest increase in households, with more than 160,000 new homes in each area.

Mr Gummer emphasised yesterday that he would protect the green belt "because people need that absolute security. But we have to ask how we are going to work within those limitations."

He did not, however, rule out more Milton Keynes-style new towns, commenting: "Whatever the solutions, they are going to be tough."

Households have shrunk over recent decades. In 1961 there were four to five people



Rural idyll: A countryman in the canal lock, his wife looking on. Life rolls gently on in Marsworth, Buckinghamshire

Photograph: Edward Sykes

per household, a figure that fell to 2.47 in 1991 and is tipped to decline to 2.17 in 2016.

The make-up of the households has dramatically altered, too. In 1991 England had 19.2 million households in England, of which 55 per cent were occupied by married couples and 27 per cent by one person.

By 2016 there are expected to be 23.6 million households, when those occupied by single 42 per cent of them composed of married couples and 36 per cent of singles.

On present trends, less than 20 per cent of all households will be occupied by nuclear families. To discourage this trend, Mr Gummer said social housing policies should favour married couples.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England hit back at Mr Gummer yesterday, saying that, unless he tackled the central failure of his Government's policy to serve either "those in need (or) the countryside", his "national debate" would rule out key questions before it began.

The national conservation body criticised what it called the department's tendency to regard the household projection figures as "targets".

It said the Government should instead concentrate on renewing the cities.

Tony Burton, the council's head of planning and natural resources, asked: "Why do the household projections dominate the debate? What about the issues of affordable housing, preserving the countryside and urban regeneration?"

He warned of the conse-

quences of unrestrained development on the nation's landscape: "If we build in the future as we have in the past and we meet the 4.4 million figure, this will involve developing an area of countryside larger than Greater London by 2016."

Warding off the predators

CLARE GARNER

More than half-a-century ago, residents at two villages were promised that an airfield would be turned back to farmland at the end of the Second World War. But, fifty years on, they have abandoned such dreams to concentrate instead on the business of warding off bids to build hundreds of houses there.

Far from enhancing the villages, the disused land at Marsworth Camp could potentially destroy a rural style of life which has been cherished by locals since the days of the Domesday Book.

In her twelve years as clerk to Marsworth parish council, in Buckinghamshire, Sylvia Frost has encountered several land-

hungry developers. Most recently, Skinned Milk Simplifiers Limited applied to build 100 residential dwellings on the property. The application was thrown out by the local district council (Aylesbury Vale) and has now gone to appeal, leaving villagers nervously awaiting Mr Gummer's response.

Local opinion is unanimous: the consequences of developing the airfield site, situated between the two Hertfordshire villages, Long Marston and Marsworth, would wipe out both communities at a stroke. The obvious problem would be the terrific increase in traffic on the narrow country lanes and canal bridges. What is now

a peaceful amble over to the canal could become a hazardous venture.

Mrs Frost explained the traditional routine: "Marsworth has a very narrow hump-back canal bridge over which only one car can pass at a time. Villagers walk over it to get to the canal. There are all sorts of plans for traffic lights and hatches on the side of the road for pedestrians but, I mean, this is a little rural community. It's totally unsafe."

There is also the toll such an influx of residents would take on the fabric of the community. "Where would these people go? Who would they get with?" asked Mrs Frost.

"There's no one in the village who objects to newcomers, but

if we have 100 houses we're going to have 200 people all at once. That's an awful lot of people to absorb into a community at one go. It will either be a separate settlement or it could set a precedent for everything to be joined together. We could become another Aylesbury or Tring or something. That would be a tragedy."

The situation is similar in Long Marston, where Rick Williams, chairman of planning for Tring rural council, is fighting the case for the village.

"We don't feel there is the need for the housing. There are a lot of houses up for sale around our way. Whatever house you want, you can have at a price. But the other lot will cost you too."

Media giants in billion-pound battle for Premier League deal

MATTHEW HORSMAN and PATRICK TOOHER

Three media giants—Lord Hollick's MAI-United, Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB and a consortium comprising Mirror Group and Carlton—yesterday delivered sealed bids to the Premier League for the right to broadcast top football in the UK.

BSkyB's bid was handed over late last night, after last-minute consultations by telephone between BSkyB's chief executive Sam Chisholm and Mr Murdoch. The two men made a final decision on the amount of the bid, which included the option of a cheeky low-ball offer.

MAI, which had kept its plans highly secret, is now known to be bidding on its own, offering between £150m and £200m a year over 10 years.

Mirror/Carlton was also thought to be offering as much as £1bn over five years for the exclusive live broadcast rights.

The 20 club chairmen were due to gather in Coventry this morning to review the offers, and could pick a winner as early as tomorrow. Some club executives had to return to the UK from holidays and business abroad, including Alan Sugar, the chairman of Tottenham Hotspur, who flew in from Greece late last night. The crucial two-day meeting takes place just before the launch of the Euro 96 football championship at Wembley on Saturday.

The current contract with BSkyB, which expires next year, was worth about £60m a year to the Premier League. But the runaway success of top football, and the prospect of billions of pounds from the broadcast of

matches on a pay-per-view basis in a few years' time, have together boosted the price-tag for the exclusive rights—probably by a factor of three.

"We always knew the price was going to go through the roof," said one leading media analyst yesterday. A source close to MAI added: "Top club Manchester United only made £2.5m [from TV] last year—about the same BSkyB gets in daily revenues."

BSkyB was still given the edge last night, thanks to its four-year record of broadcasting Premier League matches and its deep pockets. Both MAI and Mirror/Carlton plan to broadcast the matches on cable and satellite.

MAI has secured options on satellite transponders controlled by Nethold, one of Europe's leading pay-TV com-

panies. Mirror/Carlton was believed by industry observers to have failed in repeated attempts to secure satellite capacity in advance of tabling its offer. All three bidders are offering to share excess profits with the clubs.

BSkyB has a controversial right to match any competing offer for the new contract, but lawyers for Mirror/Carlton and MAI have advised that this "pre-emption" clause is unenforceable. However, lawyers for BSkyB claim the clause is binding. The League's top clubs, including Manchester United, are believed to prefer a short-term contract of no more than three years. They want to reserve the right to renegotiate once digital TV is introduced in the UK, providing the scale needed for pay-per-view.

Crumbling alliance, page 23

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Police chief on attack against England footballers and the FA

STEVE BOGGAN

The man in charge of policing the Euro '96 championships yesterday criticised the behaviour of both the English team and the Football Association.

Only three days before the kick-off of one of Britain's biggest ever sporting events, Malcolm George, Assistant Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, said last week's allegations of criminal damage

against England players on board a Cathay Pacific jet as they returned from a Far East tour "did not help" his role in heading off football hooliganism.

Reprimanding the soccer establishment, Mr George said a change in FA ticketing policy could lead to a violent breakdown of plans to segregate fans. He was speaking after the FA confirmed that unsold tickets for the tournament would be

available on matchdays to fans in the eight cities hosting the championships. Privately, officers said that the policy effectively reversed an assurance that tight controls would be imposed on ticket sales to enable police to enforce strict segregation of rival supporters.

Coupled with the availability of tickets on the black market, the latest move would mean police would have to expect "free association" of rival

fans on the terraces. "We are concerned because we supported the policy of segregation," said Mr George. "The implications of free association [among fans] are significant because of the potential for violence. It means we will have to be more vigilant, more aware and more skilful." Any breakdown in order would result in the deployment of riot police.

The FA was understood to be holding an emergency meeting

yesterday afternoon, but it is reasonable to assume that Mr George's comments about the England players will have been conveyed to senior officials.

On the ticketing issue, a spokesman said last night that the FA would continue to co-ordinate its ticket policy with the police. However, it appeared that tickets would still be sold on match days.

Meanwhile, the courts were yesterday accused of operating

Seven fans were arrested in high-profile dawn raids by police in London and Essex on Tuesday. They were part of a series of arrests around the country of alleged hooligans in advance of the championships, which begin on Saturday.

James Nichol, a respected civil liberties lawyer, who represented the 17-year-old, said after yesterday's hearing that he believed a policy of preventative detention was in force. "We are

dealing with a 17-year-old boy who allegedly threw three coins.

1

The man in charge of policing the Euro '96 championships yesterday criticised the behaviour of both the English team and the Football Association.

Complex problems: Concerns over financial past of consortium head who won go-ahead for ambitious leisure project

Ally Pally developer is a £1m bankrupt

PAUL FIELD

The businessman chosen to redevelop Alexandra Palace in north London is an undischarged bankrupt with debts of around £1m.

Derek Sheldon, 51, who was declared bankrupt in July 1994, has put together the Alexandra Palace 1999 consortium to develop a leisure complex at the birthplace of BBC television.

His proposal, which includes a multiplex cinema and a broadcasting museum, is backed by construction group Alfred McAlpine and Pilar, a property investment company. The development has been billed by Haringey Council, trustees of the palace, as an important step towards securing the long-term future of the 123-year-old site, which faces losses of £55m.

However, Mr Sheldon, who describes himself as both chairman of the consortium and project manager, denies suggestions that his financial problems affect his position. "All I lost in 1994 was my money, not my vision," he said. "I do not underestimate that this fact will be

used by our opponents. Quite clearly it is unfortunate, but it is not significant."

However, Malkins, solicitors for the trust, have written to the board of trustees, voicing concerns about Mr Sheldon. Last night, a Haringey councillor, who would not be named, claimed that the authority failed to investigate the financial background of Mr Sheldon. "This is typical of their ham-fisted approach to Ally Pally. I am not surprised at all at their selection of a bankrupt as developer."

Questions have arisen about whether Mr Sheldon has the experience to run the project, but he refutes them. One achievement he lays claim to as a leisure developer is the prestigious Loch Lomond Golf Course.

He was a director from 1987 to 1990 of developers Stirling Investments, but the company ran out of money, leaving debts of £3.5m, and administrators were called in when only two holes had been turned. After Stirling Investments collapsed, Mr Sheldon set up Golf and Leisure International, which



Making plans: Derek Sheldon refutes questions over his ability to see through the Ally Pally redevelopment

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

was wound up by Customs and Excise two years later. He then developed three bowling alleys in Scotland and one in Harrow, all of which were later sold and the companies involved dissolved.

Last night, Haringey reiterated its support for the Ally Pally

development and said the companies involved were being assessed. A spokesman for Alfred McAlpine said: "McAlpine and Pilar will carry the project through. We do not know it will mean for Mr Sheldon and his future involvement."

Pilar has reassured Haringey of its commitment to the development, but was unavailable for comment last night.

Until now, any development has been prevented because liability for the £55m debt had not been resolved. However, last month Haringey accepted liability for £50m after its

chief executive, Gurbux Singh, received a letter from the Treasury Solicitor accusing the council of failing to provide evidence to prove expenditure was properly incurred.

The £11.8m bid for the 125-year-old palace lease, drawn up by Mr Sheldon, was chosen last

week. He said: "It is very ambitious, but the response from leisure operators has been such that we could let the available space twice over." The project will need to be approved by the Charity Commission, a public planning inquiry and eventually Parliament.

Drivers quick to blame others

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR

Transport Correspondent

Three-quarters of all drivers involved in road accidents believe that their crash was someone else's fault, according to new research by the AA.

Dr Wyn Hughes, who carried out the survey, said that if drivers could recognise their own failings, the number of accidents could be reduced.

Dr Hughes, a transport researcher for Cambridge County Council studied 800 accidents on single carriage-way "A" roads in Cambridgeshire.

He found that four out of five drivers involved in the accidents were men, though women make up 37 per cent of all drivers.

Wide open roads recommended by the Department of Transport were found to be more dangerous than ones where there are bends.

The research suggests that there are 50 per cent more accidents on roads where drivers can see 580 metres ahead – the Department's standard for good visibility.

The study found no simple association between traffic density and the accident rate. It also dispelled some myths about driving on country roads. Tractors and agricultural equipment were rarely found to be the cause of accidents. And all, but 2 per cent of drivers involved in accidents in rural areas were local people familiar with the roads. Indeed, it seems that those who do not know smaller roads so well exercise more caution when using them.

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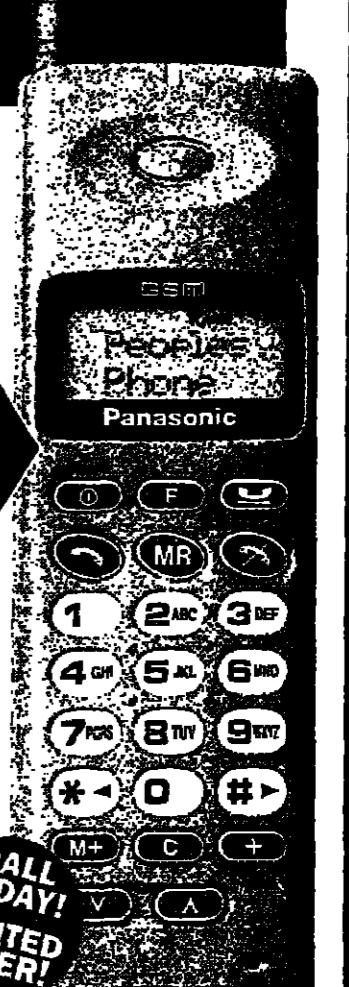
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news

Education methods: Professor clashes with traditionalists over interpretation of study showing benefits of Far East teaching

Going back to the future 'is wrong'

FRAN ABRAMS and JUDITH JUDD

Traditionalists who hope to use an academic's research to force a return to the teaching methods of the 1950s are wrong.

Professor David Reynolds, author of the research showing the benefits of whole-class maths teaching, said yesterday he did not want to see a return to the past. His comments followed as the chief inspector of schools, Chris Woodhead, that schools should turn their backs on modern lessons based on group work.

Prof. Reynolds, whose research on mathematics teaching showed that British eight-year-olds lagged behind their peers in Taiwan and Hong Kong, said schools should not drop interactive teaching.

Since his research on Taiwan

was featured in the *Independent* last year, both ministers and government advisers have praised the teaching methods used in the Far East.

Yesterday Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, and Mr. Woodhead visited Barking and Dagenham, east London, where similar methods adopted from European countries are used.

Prof. Reynolds, of the University of Newcastle, said: "There is no evidence to support what the traditionalists are saying about the effectiveness of whole-class instruction. It is whole-class interactive instruction that is the key. Going reactively towards whole-class instruction is as silly as going to group work as a reaction against whole-class teaching."

His report on Britain's maths performance over the last 25

years will be published by the Office for Standards in Education later this month.

Prof. Reynolds said more research was needed on what methods worked, and his findings should be incorporated in teacher training courses.

His report will say that low

proportion of whole-class teaching in Britain's schools is not the only reason for low standards.

British teaching methods are also too complicated.

They can cause "chaos" with teachers switching from whole-class teaching to groups based on ability in one subject to a mixed-ability group in another.

Another complication is that there may be several adults, such as parents and classroom assistants, in a classroom whom the teacher has to manage.

The report will also emphasize that some of the reasons for

Taiwanese success are cultural, not educational. Taiwanese pupils are more successful because their culture is geared to hard work.

Mr. Woodhead and Mrs. Shephard said the Barking and Dagenham experiment, which uses whole-class maths teaching in primary schools, should lead to the methods spreading.

Mr. Woodhead said: "I was very impressed by what I saw. The pupils we observed were concentrating intensely."

■ Labour's promise to reduce class sizes to no more than 30 for five- to seven-year-olds was underscored yesterday by Estelle Morris, a frontbench education spokeswoman. She told the Commons that primary education had always been treated as the "cinderella" and it was time the disparity with the secondary sector was tackled.



Maths test: The Education Secretary Gillian Shephard in Dagenham yesterday

Photograph: Edward Sykes

Pupils eager to learn in Taiwan

FRAN ABRAMS

When the teacher enters a Taiwanese classroom some of the pupils are already working, finishing off earlier lessons. Within 45 seconds they are all paying attention, facing the front and ready to begin work.

The teacher explains an element of arithmetic, using a cake to demonstrate division, for example. The lesson is fast-moving and even slightly anarchic, with several children shouting at once in answer to a question.

All the children are fully involved, coming up to the front to give their answers and writing them on the board. Sometimes six or seven of the 40-plus pupils in the class are on their feet.

Once or twice during the 40-minute lesson, the teacher asks the pupils to do a sum in their text books, but within a few minutes the whole class has completed the task and is facing the teacher again. But for

at least-nine tenths of the time, the teacher talks.

While the pupils have their heads down she walks up and down the neat rows of desks, picking out the slower pupils for a little extra help. In some classes, every child waits until the last one has finished a piece of work before moving on.

A class of seven-year-olds might be found doing number work just as they might in London or Manchester, but they would concentrate on basic sums rather than on the ways in which they might be applied. And the Taiwanese pupils are ahead of their British counterparts. Large quantities of subject matter are covered in a single lesson.

Parents of middle and low-achieving children in Taiwan are usually very happy with the system, which aims to bring everyone up to a minimum standard. Those with very bright children tend to feel less happy because pupils with problems can expect to get more of the teacher's attention.

Saddle-weary commuters left with a sore deal

Stressed cyclists get little relief at the capital's sights, writes Ben Summers

Yesterday was Bike to Work Day, but the first thing you would have noticed if, like me, you were out to mark the occasion, is that cyclists have become something of a rare breed.

I had arrived at Paddington station at 8am, ready to tackle the streets and find out if the capital's attractions make any allowances for those of us arriving on two wheels.

I soon learned why few cyclists venture out here: London's streets are unforgiving. Just 200 yards down the road from the station I was nearly sandwiched between curb and car.

Perhaps drivers would treat me with a little more respect if I were an MP, I mused. So I took myself off to Covent Garden to see if this was true. There, I found forty honourable members diligently loading up on free croissants in preparation for the 1996 MPs' Bike Ride.

As they pushed off, the group quickly took on the appearance of a cycle protest, forming a thick knot of bicycles. No one wanted to be at the back; everyone wanted to lead. Thus did a clump of MPs make their unsteady way to Parliament, ties flittering in the breeze.

I was hooted angrily, motorists cut across and civil servants scowled. Who were these mad men and why were they blocking up Whitehall?

The convoy arrived at the House and the bikes were taken away in a large white van. The parliamentary bike rack, after all, only has space for 35.

Yet 35 turns out to be a fairly healthy allowance. On my subsequent bicycle tour of the capital, only the British Museum could top it, with parking available for 36.

The Royal Academy has just two orange hoops on to which four early-bird visitors can chain their treaders. It is left to the railings outside for the rest.

Bottom of the high-culture, low-cycle-tolerance league is the National Gallery. As I arrived, a white-haired gentleman was

locking his bike on to the only available lampost on that side of Trafalgar Square.

The man at the gallery's reception desk said there was no official cycle space for visitors. Furthermore, a passing traffic warden warned me that it would be a bad idea to lock anything to anything on the other side of the Square. This is the edge of the centre's "ring of steel".

Would my bike be clamped if I locked it there? No, but it would be reported to the police and they would come, cut the lock and cart it off to the pound. Suitably chastened, I pedalled off in search of some light

Bicycle facts

If one-third of all short car journeys were made by bike, heart disease rates would fall by five to 10 per cent.

In a city, a large car is 85 times less energy-efficient than a bike.

200 cyclists die on British roads each year (of whom 20 are killed in London).

Cyclists are at fault in 25 per cent of collisions with a motor vehicle; motorists are at fault in 57 per cent.

refinement. Le Meridien hotel, Piccadilly, looked tempting, but bikes could not be housed on the premises. The Café Royal nearby did, however, have space.

The Ritz did not put on a bike rack but there is apparently little demand. One would have to find a mailing, suggested the doorman, or he could keep an eye on it for a short while.

It seems the car still rules in the capital. Apart from stage-managed MPs, there were more cycle couriers to be seen than cycle commuters yesterday.

Still, as I jammed my bike into the train at Paddington, apologising as I went, I reflected that there are some ordeals which are spared to the purest of bike-to-work purists.



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The Referendum Party

The Question

The Referendum Party welcomes the Referendum Bill to be brought before the House of Commons on Tuesday, 11th June, by cross-party pro-referendum MPs.¹

In the Bill, the wording for the proposed Ballot paper for the referendum is:

Preamble:

The United Kingdom Government, as a continuing member of the European Community and the European Union, is in the course of negotiations for the revision of the Treaty of European Union.

The Question:

"DO YOU WANT THE UNITED KINGDOM TO PROPOSE AND INSIST ON IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES IN THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION SO THAT THE U.K. RETAINS ITS POWERS OF GOVERNMENT AND IS NOT PART OF A FEDERAL EUROPE NOR OF A EUROPEAN MONETARY UNION, INCLUDING A SINGLE CURRENCY?"

This question addresses the fundamental national issue: do the people wish the UK, as a continuing member of the EU, to be part of a European federal superstate into which Europe's nations would be merged. Or, do they insist that the UK be a continuing member of the EU which would be a family of sovereign nations with institutions based on the principle of political co-operation. That is to say a Europe of Nations.

A Referendum is necessary because the leadership of the Labour and Lib-Dem parties embrace, with enthusiasm, the concept of a federal Europe. For its part, the Government, despite its words, has allowed the accelerating transfer of national sovereignty to Brussels. So electors have never been granted a choice.

The government is not credible when it claims that

there will be no federal Europe for so long as it is in power.

This is the government that agreed and signed the federalist Treaty of Maastricht and forced it through Parliament. Its members in the European Parliament are allied to a party, the European People's Party, whose written proposals state: "Our aim is a Union built on the principles of federalism". In other words, it proposes a federal European superstate.

As Britain's foremost constitutionalist, A.V. Dicey, wrote: "the main use of the Referendum is to prevent the passing of any important Act which does not command the sanction of the electors".² "The Referendum supplies... the best, if not the only possible, check upon ill-considered alterations in the fundamental institutions of the country".³

If you wish to become a supporter of The Referendum Party please write to:

Dean Bradley House, 52 Horseferry Road, Westminster, London SW1P 2AE

Tel: 0181-563 1155. Fax: 0181-563 1156. (After June 13th) Tel: 0171-227 8500. Fax: 0171-227 8519.

1. Referendum Bill to be introduced by William Cash MP. 2. Dicey A.V. Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution: 8th Edition, London, 1920, p xcii. 3. Dicey A.V. "Ought the Referendum to be introduced in England", Contemporary Review, Vol LVII, April 1890, p 505.

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RCA exam dispute: Hockney sends message of support to photography 'failures' as exhibitors withdraw work from annual show

Students call for resignation of course director

DAVID LISTER

Students on the Royal College of Art MA photography course yesterday called for the resignation of their course director following an unprecedented number of failures on the course.

As revealed in the *Independent* last week, more than a quarter of the students on the photography course at the RCA failed to satisfy the examiners, opening up the debate of to what extent photographs should be seen as art. The external examiner was Michael Collins, a former picture editor of the *Daily Telegraph* magazine.

As an exhibition of successful students' work opened this week, students took their work down from the walls in solidarity with their failed colleagues. And David Hockney, himself a former student at the RCA, visited the show and sent the students a message of support.

Hockney wrote to them: "Make your own (diploma). It will be as meaningful as the RCAs. It's only dentists and accountants who give you confidence when you see their

diplomas on the wall. They take all that too seriously here. I thought your show's very good. Whatever you do, don't let them keep you in after school."

Yesterday the students on the course issued a statement unanimously demanding the resignation of Michael Langford, the course director. In their statement the students said: "The results of the final examination were entirely unexpected. Students were given no prior notice of their impending failure."

They called for the resignation of the director of the photography course and "a reassessment for the entire graduating year and validity of the examination procedure."

Ironically, some of the failed students found their work in the catalogue the RCA was handing out to members of the public yesterday. One failed student said: "I have been given no reason at all. I've spent two years working on this and have been given nothing but encouragement from visiting lecturers and academic staff."

Last night, Christopher Frayling, pro-rector of the Roy-

al College of Art, gave his first comments on the dispute. He said: "In the final examinations for photography two students failed and two students were referred. The two referred students will be re-examined. The two failed students' appeals will be heard. We will look at whether everything was conducted correctly, whether there have been any procedural anomalies. But the appeal is strictly not on the work."

Mr Frayling added: "I don't see this as an issue of principle at all. It's about individual students. By their work shall they be judged."



Artless: Four exhibits from the Royal College of Art photography-degree show (clockwise from left) - *Lisbon 1995* by Anthony Coleman; *Brothers* by Jacqueline Pearson; and *Traffic Jam* by David Berton

Dire images and confusion in a show with no art

Can photography be art? Judging by this year's entrants to the Royal College of Art's annual degree show, I think not.

If photography is to be taught at a school of art such as the RCA then art is what should be produced. Referring only to the degree-show catalogue, I am quite frankly appalled at the quality of the final exhibits. If this is the best that can be done after a two-year course might I suggest some of the students (and their lecturers) think about another form of employment.

Traffic Jam (nice pun) failed, and I am not surprised. The pun is humorous but the image is dire. Perhaps a turn at the Comedy Store.

Lisbon 1995. Also failed. Now I quite like this picture, again a level of humour (sadly lacking in a lot of contemporary photography) but it's not art whether you use an upper or lower case "A". If this photograph had been part of a set on a photo-journalism course, such as at Cardiff or the London College of Printing, it would have passed.

Here we have the problem. The RCA photography degree course is assessed by a former newspaper-picture editor and not someone from an arts background; so, maybe he is looking for "Art" while the students are trying for journalistic images. Confusion for all.

The image of leaves, I presume, for there is no title, passed. Now, I am broad-

Brian Harris,
Independent
photographer,
assesses the RCA's
degree exhibits

minded, but please, give me a break - pretentious or what? It looks like a wind-on - or should that be a wind-up? - when the camera was loaded with film.

Brothers, by Jacqueline Pearson, passed and I am pleased for her. A sensitive, dare I say beautiful image which I am sure is sharp in the original because it isn't in the catalogue, or perhaps the softness makes it artistic. In any event, the most charming photographic image in the book.

I feel sad when I see work such as these images exhibited. What a waste of two years. I am an editorial-news photographer and have been a visiting lecturer at the RCA. I regard my work as a craft. But having seen this year's RCA winners and losers I may have to reassess my own work and start wearing a smock and beret.

'Saigon' in the wars over lack of misses

The West End stage musical *Miss Saigon* has encountered a crisis because the management cannot find any young oriental children for the show, writes David Lister.

The plot requires a tiny child of oriental appearance to play the role of the four-year-old daughter of a Vietnamese woman and an American serviceman.

The show's management has been alarmed to discover that advertisements in London's Chinatown for stage-struck children to star in the show have unnerved the local community.

"We've had little cards printed and handed out in China-

town, but they think you're pimping their children," said the show's children's casting director, Sam Hunter, yesterday.

"There's certainly not a great theatre background in these communities. We've had terrible difficulties. I don't know what we are going to do. We can't cut the child," she said.

Since the show opened in 1989, 40 children from the Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese and Japanese communities to play the boy.

The licensing authorities have ruled that each one may work only 40 days a year and only two days a week.

The show now needs another five children. Despite many searches, it has found only one yet.

Miss Hunter said the show's producer, Sir Cameron Mackintosh, would not consider closing the show.

But he would look at lengthening the amount of time each child actor was retained in the musical.

Sir Cameron is throwing the theatre open all day on Saturday week to audition suitable children, who should be accompanied by a parent. Miss Hunter said.

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politics

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

The £1.5bn sell-off of MoD married quarters – one of the biggest “privatisations” ever – will be finalised after offers from four potential short-listed purchasers are assessed, the Government confirmed yesterday.

But the Ministry of Defence has only been guaranteed a £100m share of the proceeds. The rest may disappear into the Treasury “pot of gold”, amid widespread speculation that the true purpose of the deal is to create a massive windfall to fund tax cuts.

The plans have outraged servicemen and their families, a number of members of the House of Lords, including Field Marshal Lord Bramall, who called them a “national disgrace”, and MPs of all parties.

Under the scheme, the MoD will retain the freehold on the 600 married quarter houses on 800 sites across England and Wales, but leases them for 999 years. The MoD’s Defence Housing Executive will retain control over the properties for as long as it requires them, and pay rent to the lessee. The Government will therefore get a massive cash injection, while the lessee gets a guaranteed income from a reliable source. The MoD also retains responsibility for maintenance of the properties. *Chris Bellamy*

Lone parents may be refused all benefits relating to first-time claims, unless they agree to co-operate with the Child Support Agency, under plans being considered by ministers.

And for those already on benefit who adopt an approach of “passive avoidance” and simply refuse to fill in the forms or co-operate at all with the agency, ministers may double the present benefit deduction to £20 a week and make it indefinite.

The ideas were bitterly attacked yesterday by the National Council for One Parent Families and the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which told MPs on the Commons social security committee that the first idea would “reduce women with children to destitution for their unwillingness to seek maintenance”. Increasing deductions would put the welfare of children “at serious risk”, the association added. *Nicholas Timmins*

Railtrack faces prosecution if it fails to comply with safety demands to improve the condition of the track outside Euston station, it was warned yesterday.

In evidence to the all-party Commons committee on transport, Stan Robertson, chief inspecting officer of the railways, working on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive, said there had been “failures in the Railtrack system” that led to the track condition deteriorating so badly that immediate improvements were necessary.

Thousands of commuters and long-distance travellers have faced lengthy delays because of the condition of the track in recent months, and in March, the HSE took the rare step of issuing an improvement notice, giving Railtrack a year to carry out the work. Mr Robertson said the HSE was monitoring the situation “regularly but not monthly”, an answer which did not appear to satisfy the MPs, who pressed him to be more specific. *Christian Wolmar*

Victims’ relatives should be legally represented at hearings to decide when murderers are freed from prison, according to the Commons home affairs select committee, which also confirmed its view that the Home Secretary should no longer play any part in deciding when to release convicted killers.

However, members had not changed their view that the mandatory life sentence should remain for all murders – resisting pleas from the senior judiciary, peers and lawyers for its abolition. *Heather Mills*

The Europe Debate: Were expectations of success for policy of non-cooperation over-optimistic?

Cabinet struggle to preserve unity

DONALD MACINTYRE
Political Editor

Yesterday’s hardline statement by Jacques Santer, the European Commission President, that Britain’s “absurd” disruption of crucial business had no place in a Union based on the rule of law and solidarity, will send tremors through a Cabinet which had, at least temporarily, united around the policy of non-cooperation.

It is not what most ministers claimed to expect and at least one senior Cabinet minister was musing yesterday, before hearing the news from Brussels, that the policy was working well. Not only, the minister insisted, had our European partners well understood the tactic, but it had helped to concentrate minds and stood every chance of leading eventually to the solution Britain wanted, a realistic programme for lifting the beef ban.

The calculation, the minister explained, was that at present the strategy was little more than an irritant for our partners; but they were keenly aware that if it went on until October it would seriously begin to foul up EU business. And this the partners were anxious to avoid.

That suddenly looks an over-optimistic prognosis. It may be that it will simply lead to a spate of clandestine negotiation which will end – possibly as soon as the Florence summit in three weeks – in a deal. But to understand how the varying ministerial forces will now deploy in response the President’s spectacular piece of brinkmanship, it is necessary first to see how it was arrived at.

It has recently become clear that Alastair Goodlad, the Tory Chief Whip, played a prominent part in ensuring senior ministers signed up to John Major’s decision a fortnight ago to embark on non-cooperation.

It was not merely that Mr Goodlad warned the Prime Minister that if Douglas Hogg, the Minister of Agriculture, went empty handed to announce to Parliament that Britain had failed to lift the beef derivatives ban but then added doggedly that things were still moving our way, he would be subjected to a mauling by Tory backbenchers.

It is also now clear that Mr Goodlad played some part in underlining the gravity of the situation to Kenneth Clarke, the



Alastair Goodlad, Chief Whip: Rapidly emerging as a key figure at John Major’s side in the present crisis. Played a critical part in emphasising a fortnight ago to Mr Major and other colleagues the hopelessness of allowing Douglas Hogg to be thrown to the wolves with nothing to report except yet another rebuff in the battle to get the derivatives ban lifted. Especially sensitive to mainstream backbench opinion from Tory shore bars seriously unhappy about the beef ban and the Ministry of Agriculture’s handling of the crisis. Will be pivotal in advising Mr Major over the impact of any deal on the Commons.

Malcolm Rifkind, Foreign Secretary: Although his background is broadly pro-European, has shown signs of moving towards the Eurosceptic centre of the party – for example, by opposing a single currency. Officials, instinctively wary of bust-ups with the EU, will be agitating for an early deal with Brussels. But how Rifkind responds to their advice will be crucial. Seen by disappointed pro-Europeans as one of a group of ministers – including Stephen Dorrell and William Waldegrave – reinventing themselves as sceptics with an eye to rightwards party drift after the election. And for Dorrell and Rifkind, their own chances of leadership.

Kenneth Clarke, Chancellor: Consistent pro-European though not a man to shirk a bust-up with the EU when necessary. He was persuaded swiftly a fortnight ago to back strategy but has also repeatedly emphasised it is a temporary tactic to realise an achievable goal. Would not want what Douglas Hurd has called protracted “trench warfare” with Europe. Other strong pro-Europeans such as Sir George Young, John Gummer and Sir Patrick Mayhew likely to take their lead from him. But remember Michael Heseltine – less publicly vociferous recently than Clarke but still as instinctively pro-European.

Michael Howard, Home Secretary: Has rapidly emerged as the leading Cabinet figure on the right in the debate over the future of Europe – even though Peter Lilley and Michael Portillo have in the past been assumed to take harder line than he does. Has serious Eurosceptic street cred as a long-time opponent of a single currency. Has been agitating for some form of constitutional measure to limit the reach of European law in Britain. Vetoed 10 EU measures, with some relish, on Tuesday in accordance with non-co-operation. Has told friends he wants settlement but is expected to look at small print carefully.

Chancellor. There was a sort of running meeting at Downing Street on the morning of 21 May, with senior Cabinet members passing in and out of the room. But the Treasury has made no secret of the fact that Mr Clarke saw Mr Goodlad as well as Mr Major before giving his imprimatur to the strategy.

Part of Mr Goodlad’s strength in this sort of crisis is that as a Major loyalist and politician with strong pro-European credentials, he can be exonerated of any hint of Eurosceptic posturing.

Moreover, colleagues say he was worried not only about Eurosceptic criticism of the Government but about menacing grumblings from some of those mainstream Tory shore knights and others who have big farming constituencies and were unimpressed by the Ministry of Agriculture’s handling of the

crisis. Sir Tom King, Sir Peter Hordern, Sir James Spicer and the former Cabinet minister John MacGregor are all said to be in this group.

Mr Goodlad’s word, therefore, weighed heavily with ministers – and not just Mr Clarke. Moreover, it is not that Mr Clarke has stomach for a dust up with Europe, whatever his Eurosceptic critics may say.

Moreover, he approved the strategy within hours, in contrast to the time it took to convert him to a commitment to a single-currency referendum. But he would have been anxious to ensure that the strategy was necessary, and also to ensure that by agreeing to it he was warding off more potentially self-destructive options such as withholding EU contributions.

He is also unlikely to want the tactic prolonged a moment

longer than it has to be. And in this he no doubt has considerable support within the Cabinet. But here’s the rub. For there are several on the right of the Cabinet who could be less inclined to a long-drawn-out standoff and certainly would have countenanced sterner measures.

Take Michael Howard, for example. The Home Secretary has been promoting an explosive little Cabinet paper which would mean amending the 1972 European Communities Act to remove the obligation, and the right, of British courts to enforce European law. Mr Howard pointed out to his colleagues as the crisis built up last month that if enacted quickly that would actually help Britain defy the beef ban – for example by exporting beef to South Africa. A British court would no longer be able to rule against such action.

Against this background Mr Major faces his most testing time since Mr Santer’s comments yesterday, the EU finally offers some sort of framework for lifting the beef ban. If he holds out for better terms he risks alienating his Chancellor and his pro-European allies. If he accepts something too “floppy” for the right, he risks fresh strife with the Eurosceptics.

Some senior Tories are warning that Labour could have a crucial role at this stage. If Tony Blair were tempted to draft an Opposition motion containing, for example, a blanket condemnation of the Government’s handling of the beef crisis, Eurosceptic backbenchers angry at what they see as the inadequacy of the deal may be equally tempted to support him. Some senior Labour pro-Europeans would not like

him to do something as opportunistic; and it may not happen. The other crucial variable could be the role of Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary. His officials are already worried by the impact of non-cooperation on EU foreign policy. Blocking enlargement moves, or monitors for the forthcoming Bosnian elections, appeals some in the Foreign Office. But it does not follow that Mr Rifkind will heed their advice.

The best bet must be that, despite all the pessimism engendered by Mr Santer’s statement yesterday, Mr Major will succeed in forcing through a deal which falls well short of what the fervent Eurosceptics might want; and that all but the hardest-line backbenchers will sign up to it with varying degrees of reluctance. But it will be touch and go.

Letters, page 13

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Blair's top lawyer in backing for Howard

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES

Judges should keep their tanks off Parliament's lawn, a senior Labour politician declared yesterday. The court warning to the judiciary to stay out of the political arena was delivered yesterday by Labour's Lord Chancellor-in-waiting, Lord Irvine, as he defended the right of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, to put his controversial sentencing plans before Parliament.

Lord Irvine's pointed criticism came during a Lords' debate on the dangers of "judicial invasion of the legislative turf", which he himself had initiated. Senior judges have repeatedly criticised the Howard plans.

However, Labour backbenchers on the Home Affairs Select Committee yesterday backed a bid to remove the Home Secretary's right to set tariffs for murderers serving mandatory life sentences and to decide whether or not they should be released.

Jack Straw, the shadow home secretary, pointedly declined to move from his previously held position that the Home Secretary's role should continue, although his office said last night that he would study the committee's report carefully.

In the debate, Lord Irvine said judges should not stay beyond their constitutional role as interpreters of enacted law.

Referring to suggestions by some senior judges – including Lord Woolf, the new Master of the Rolls – that the courts might in exceptional cases hold invalid statutes duly passed by Parliament, Lord Irvine declared that such an action would

suggest "a judicial invasion of the legislature's turf."

This causes ordinary people not only to think that the judges might have got over and above themselves, but that perhaps they are exercising a political function in judicial review cases instead of simply upholding the rule of law," he said.

Setting out Labour's attitude to the judiciary for the first time in the Westminster forum, Lord Irvine also criticised the recent suggestion by the new Lord Chief Justice, Lord Bingham, that the courts might feel compelled to act to protect the individual's right to privacy if legislation was not forthcoming.

"It sounds to ordinary people uncomfortably like a judicial threat to legislate."

Judges could only do that if there was a "clear community consensus that way. If there is no such consensus, and I am sure there is none, then I say they would seem to be taking sides. The result would be to imperil their major asset, their reputation for impartiality."

As to Mr Howard's sentencing proposals, they were, as senior judges had declared, "ill-judged", he said. "The present Home Secretary gives every impression of playing politics with the administration of justice."

"But if Parliament were to legislate for these proposals then that would be neither unconstitutional nor prejudicial to the independence of the judiciary," he continued.

"It is only if self-restraint is displayed on both sides that the public will have confidence that the separation of power is alive and well and working."

Blair warned of rebellion on voting reform

COLIN BROWN

Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair was warned by two former Shadow Cabinet members yesterday that he could face trouble from his own backbenchers if a Labour Government tried to push through legislation for reform of the House of Commons.

Roy Hattersley, the former deputy leader, and Gerald Kaufman, the former shadow Foreign Secretary, launched a campaign for "first-past-the-post" voting to be retained for Parliamentary and local elections.

Mr Kaufman said: "You have the bizarre possibility of a Labour Party, out of opposition after 18 years, asking its newly elected, victorious, triumphant, and exultant backbenchers to abolish their constituencies, which they have fought very hard to win."

"There are some members of the Shadow Cabinet who have voiced their support for proportional representation. I would be interested to know which of them would be willing to give up his seat to Alan Beith, Paddy Ashdown, or Menzies Campbell."

The clear message to Mr Blair was that many incoming Labour MPs would not vote for

any proportional representation Bill under a Labour Government.

Mr Kaufman said that if Labour had an overall majority of one after the General Election, introducing proportional representation for the Commons would require 34 Labour MPs to vote for the abolition of their own seats. Every Labour MP added to the majority would be expected to abolish his own seat, Mr Kaufman said.

Some key members of the First Past the Post Group believe a Blair government could be defeated, if it attempted to pass the legislation through a combination of Labour rebellion and Tory opposition.

Mr Blair has stopped short of embracing electoral reform for the Commons, but Labour is committed to offering a referendum on PR. The group is mounting its campaign now, through trades unions and Labour constituencies, to reverse the pressure for PR.

Mr Hattersley said in any system of PR there was domination by smaller parties.

"I joined the Labour Party to change the nature of society. That objective cannot be achieved by a coalition government and coalition governments are the inevitable outcome of PR."

Ashdown attacked on top earners' tax

COLIN BROWN

Chief Political Correspondent

Labour last night accused Paddy Ashdown of using higher taxes as a "virility symbol" after the Liberal Democrat leader proposed tackling poverty by introducing a higher rate of tax of 50p in the pound for high earners.

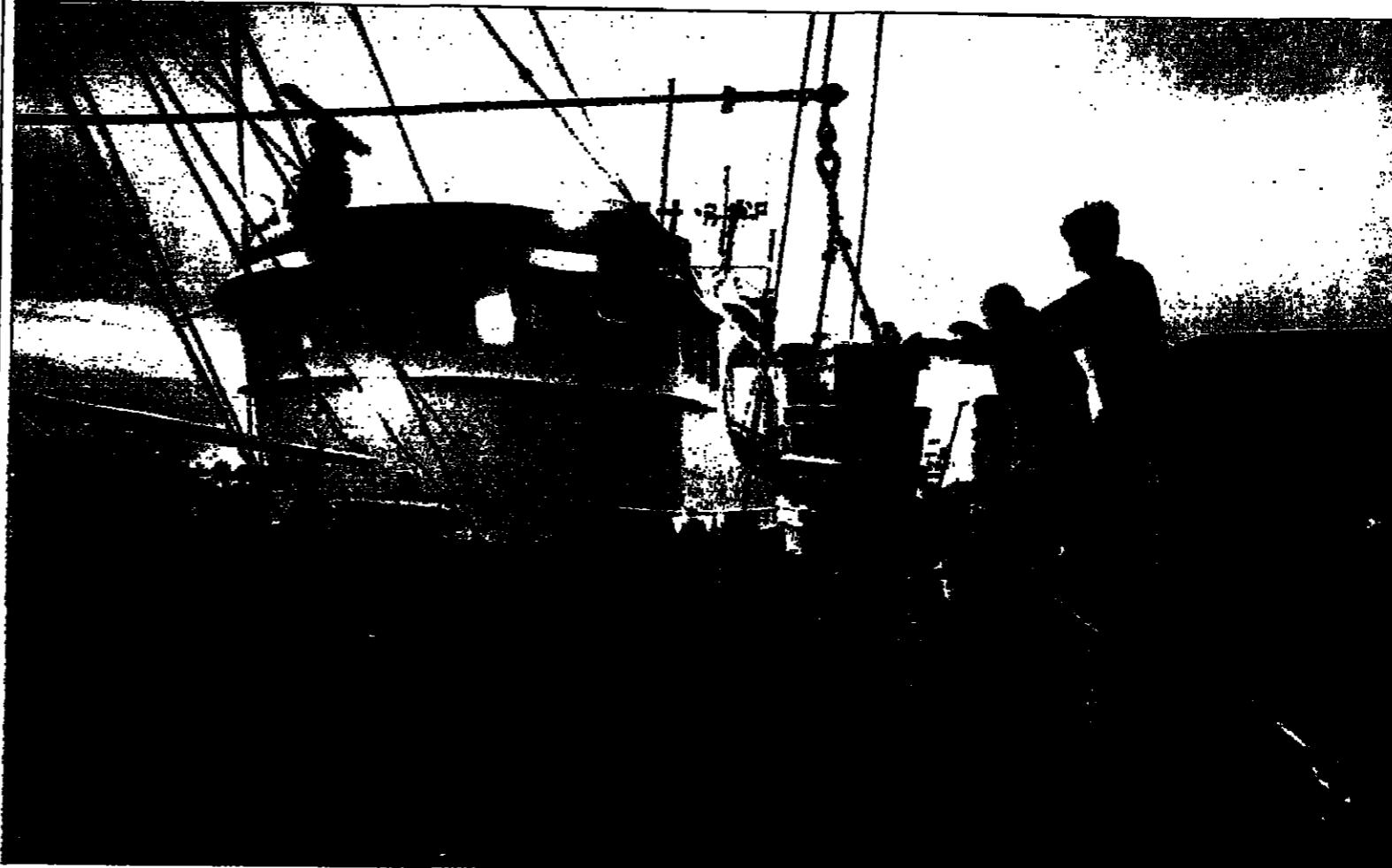
The proposal to introduce the higher rate for those earning over £100,000 put pressure on Tony Blair to adopt a more radical policy on poverty. But Mike O'Brien, a Labour treasury spokesman, said: "Labour will never impose tax hikes for the sake of it. We have a responsibility to the British people to be prudent."

An estimated 750,000 low earners could be lifted out of tax

altogether with £1.1bn raised from the higher tax on about 120,000 taxpayers who earn top salaries. The Liberal Democrat policy on poverty – called a "helping hand" – echoed Labour's promise of a "hand up, not a hand out". But Labour has so far refused to commit itself to a higher rate of tax to pay for its plans.

Tory leaders attacked the proposal to raise taxes, but Liberal Democrat sources said their plans were modest compared to Germany (53 per cent on earnings over £27,000) or France (57 per cent on earnings over £27,000). Mr Ashdown said the pledge to raise taxes for those earning over £100,000 was part of his party's strategy of adopting a distinctive image.

Britain warns Brussels over 40% cut to fishing fleet



Vanishing world: Fishermen unloading their catch in Newlyn harbour, Cornwall

Photograph: Tom Pilston

Further cuts in the United Kingdom fishing fleet will be opposed until the European Commission tackles flag-of-convenience vessels fishing British waters, the Government warned last night.

To loud cheers from Tory MPs in the Commons, the Fisheries minister Tony Balding branded proposals to cut the UK fleet by up to 40 per cent "wholly unacceptable".

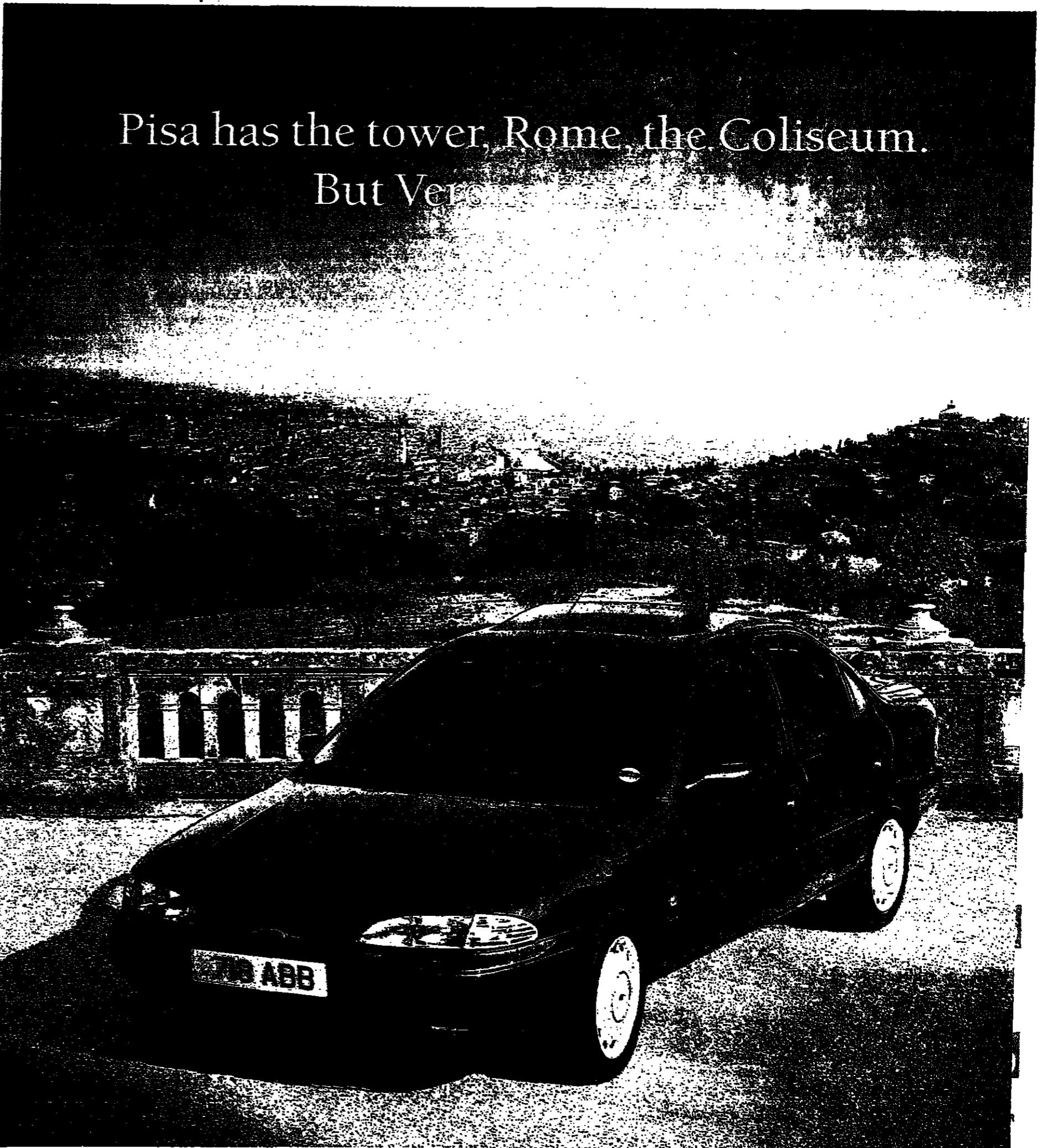
He said: "The EC cannot be surprised that the UK fishing industry is not and will not be prepared to contemplate any further substantial reductions in the UK fishing fleet until the commission address, tackle and deal with the whole issue of quota hoppers."

Until "real and substantial" progress was made in tackling quota hoppers, the Government was not ready to agree measures to reduce the UK fishing fleet further, he said.

The European Fisheries Commissioner Emma Bonino said last week that cuts of up to 40 per cent in the British fishing fleet might be necessary to conserve dwindling fish stocks.

But Mr Balding stressed last night in the debate on a scheme to decommission fishing vessels that the "crazy situation where Spanish-owned vessels 'masquerade' as British boats and caught fish against the UK national quota could not be allowed to continue."

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France and Germany: Kohl and Chirac deny alliance is under strain over changing priorities in Paris, but shift their strategy

Britain to share in defence projects

MARY DEJEVSKY
Dijon

France and Germany yesterday acknowledged that their joint defence projects need to be reassessed, a move that could open up the opportunity for three-way co-operation with Britain.

The reassessment reflects growing budgetary strains on both countries, and the impact of recent tensions over defence policy. They have also drafted a joint document on defence strategy to be finalised in six months' time.

The decisions, which follow months of Franco-German tension over France's proposed military and defence reforms, were taken during a meeting of the two countries' joint military council which met at the start of yesterday's summit in Dijon between President Jacques Chirac and Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

Military and defence issues supplied the focus for yesterday's summit, which was presented by Mr Chirac as an occasion to bury

the hatchet after a period in which German officials have questioned France's commitment to joint projects and European co-operation on defence and security generally. A year ago Germany was surprised by Mr Chirac's decision to resume nuclear testing. This was followed by Mr Chirac's announcement to end conscription, and of sweeping armaments cuts.

Opening yesterday's summit Mr Chirac said that any misunderstandings that might have arisen no longer existed. Afterwards, however, he said: "Frankly, there was never any ill-feeling." He had earlier said that he wanted to "disabuse" journalists that there was any problem in Franco-German relations. "Nothing, I repeat nothing, will ever call this process [the French-German entente] into question," he said, to nods from Chancellor Kohl.

The German leader took a different tack on the question of misunderstandings, acknowledging that "sometimes we have differences, but then we sit down



Crest of a wave: President Jacques Chirac (left) and Chancellor Helmut Kohl arriving at the summit in Dijon yesterday

Photograph: AFP

together and talk about them, as one would with one's children, wife or friends. Why should anyone think that there should be no differences between us?"

But he insisted that Mr Chirac had told him of France's defence plans early on "in a friendly and correct manner".

On the subject of bilateral arms projects, Mr Chirac said that no project was in question, although some might be staged over a longer period. This appeared to be a reference to the Tigre helicopter programme, for which France has delayed and scaled down envisaged orders.

His assurances, however, seemed to be limited to projects that are strictly bilateral, and would not affect the Future Large Aircraft project, from which France said it was withdrawing because it could no longer afford to participate. It was not clear yesterday

whether the planned review of joint projects would include the FLA.

When Michael Portillo, the Secretary of State for Defence, visited France on Monday, he revealed that France and Germany had agreed to admit Britain to what he described as

the "so-called Franco-German arms agency".

However, Mr Portillo acknowledged that there were still difficulties over Britain's membership, disclosing the existence of "more conditions and strings than was at first clear".

Europe steps up to the front line

Analysis

Europe is getting its act together on defence. The last few days have seen a series of small steps forward, which is encouraging, but they have also seen a few steps back, and that is just as heartening.

First, the steps forward. Decisions taken by Nato in Berlin on Monday mean there is a realistic possibility that, some time in the future, Europe may be able to take on defence tasks that at the moment require direct US participation.

Second, the steps back. Yesterday, France and Germany agreed to reassess some of their co-operative defence projects, and maybe to open them up to other nations, perhaps including Britain. This is a decision driven by money, above all: the rising cost of some of those projects, and the pressure on budgets caused by the shift to European Monetary Union.

But it also reflects France's move back towards the mainstream of European defence. There is less need for an exclusive Franco-German alliance in this area, now that all European states - including Britain - accept the need for a European defence and security identity, however defined, and now France is heading back into Nato's military structures.

Oddly enough, Britain finds itself well placed in this complex series of manoeuvres. Even Michael Portillo sounds sensible when discussing European defence (at least when he is not at the Conservative Party conference). He said on Monday in Paris that Britain might join the Franco-German arms procurement agency.

The British view has always been that European defence can be built only from the bottom up, not by constructing grand concepts. Both the new Nato thinking and greater co-operation on procurement are signs that on this subject, at least, Europe is moving in our direction.

Andrew Marshall

French swim into hot water with synchronised Holocaust

IAN PHILLIPS
Paris

For most people, synchronised swimming is an innocuous sport, which involves young women gesticulating and smiling madly in the middle of a swimming pool. But now, the French Olympic team have brought a darker side to the sport with a move which has caused outrage in France. Of all the themes they could

have chosen for their Olympic programme, they have rather controversially plumped for the Holocaust. For four minutes in an Atlanta pool this summer, they will act out a routine, which depicts the rise of Nazism and the horrors of the Second World War.

Fortunately, the eight swimmers on the national team will not be donning either Hitlerian moustaches or jack boots. Nor will they be goose-stepping

around the edge of the Olympic pool. They will however be re-enacting the arrival of Jews in concentration camps to songs from the ghettos and the theme music of *Schindler's List*.

"I chose this theme because it allows us to convey emotions," says national trainer, Odile Petit. "After all, our sport is one of expression." However, even the president of the French Swimming Federation, Francis Luyet, acknowledges that he

was "a bit surprised" when he first saw the programme at the French Championships in Amiens in March. "I heard a few comments from the audience which showed the programme was not unanimously appreciated," he said. "I understand that this is a sensitive subject, but it is not meant to be a provocation."

Naturally, the idea of an aquatic Shoah has not gone down well with everyone. One spectator was led to express his

"profound revulsion" after watching the programme. "How great was my amazement when I discovered half a dozen young girls wearing caps and nosepags, swimming around in the sweet blue water of a swimming pool, simulating the sorting out of deportees as they got off trains at the entrance to Nazi camps," he wrote to the French Swimming Federation. "You have accomplished the most advanced act of desacralisation."

Ms Petit does not seem to have upset judges. Two weeks ago at the European Cup, the French beat the Russians for the first time in seven years. This may be because the audience did not understand what was going on. "The symbols are not obvious to understand," admits Ms Petit. "Swimmers ... who were not aware of the theme, did not know what it was about." Maybe it's not that expressive after all.

The theme does not seem to have upset judges. Two weeks ago at the European Cup, the French beat the Russians for the first time in seven years. This may be because the audience did not understand what was going on. "The symbols are not obvious to understand," admits Ms Petit. "Swimmers ... who were not aware of the theme, did not know what it was about." Maybe it's not that expressive after all.

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Simple peace equation that doesn't add up

Sitting on the lawn of Rafiq Hariri's Beirut mansion, it all sounded so simple. If Bibi Netanyahu orders Israeli occupation soldiers out of southern Lebanon, the Hezbollah will be disarmed. "If Mr Netanyahu wants to change his image and the impression he gave during the election campaign, he will withdraw from Lebanon with no conditions," the Lebanese Prime Minister said, the equation so mathematical as it floated over the perfectly cut lawn. "Then Lebanon will be able to assure security in the south."

If only it was that easy. What the apparently moderate Shimon Peres couldn't do, the right-wing Mr Netanyahu might do. Was this not the Begin syndrome again: the idea that the more hawkish the Israelis, the easier they will find it to make concessions to the Arabs?

But Mr Hariri is shrewder than that and, sitting in his garden chair, the hammering of reconstruction banging away behind the trees in west Beirut, he seemed to have few illusions.

"From our side, we don't differentiate between Peres and Netanyahu - and you shouldn't forget that a few weeks ago, it was Peres who was bombing civilians in Lebanon... I didn't believe at all that Peres would win. I told everyone who asked

Lebanon's Prime Minister tells Robert Fisk he will disarm Hezbollah in exchange for Israeli withdrawal

me that it was 50/50. "Like most Middle East leaders, Mr Hariri watched the election on television and he watched the Peres performance closely. "The way he was acting during the election campaign made me think it would be very difficult for him to win. It may be the [April] war in Lebanon played a role [in Peres's defeat]. He looked like he was inconsistent in his ideas on peace. He talked about peace and he made war. He killed civilians and he went to Paris and talked about tolerance. I think many Israelis were confused. They heard Peres talking about peace and watching him make war. On the other hand, they saw another man who was young and new... I saw on TV many normal Israeli people are afraid of the future, afraid of how Israel will be governed and the future of the peace process. I saw young and middle-aged people talking about uncertainty."

Doubt is not something Mr Hariri is prepared to contemplate about Lebanon, a sentiment which may not be shared by all the Lebanese. While living in the nearest to a Western-

style democracy that exists in the Arab world, the Lebanese know that their government must never contradict Syria and that Syria's favourites sit in cabinet with Mr Hariri. They fear that Israel may soon strike again at Lebanon and that Syria's 22,000 troops in the country will no more be able to protect them next time than they could in

If Netanyahu withdraws from Lebanon, peace can take place'

April. But the billionaire Prime Minister, whose personal investment in Lebanon's post-civil war reconstruction includes a 10-per-cent shareholding in the company rebuilding Beirut's city centre, believes Lebanon has been inoculated against Israeli bombardments.

The last [Israeli] aggression showed that Lebanon is immune enough to function normally after 16 days of bombardment... We are a peaceful

country. We are not trying to be militarily strong like Israel. We are trying to rebuild, to develop our country, to build schools and hospitals."

Nations can rebuild even when they are partly occupied.

Mr Hariri said: "Part of Syria has been occupied since 1967

and they have a development programme. Jordan and Egypt

had part of their country occupied for many years. But they

are still continuing developing their

country."

But then, what has happened to the 27 April ceasefire? Had

not four Israeli soldiers been killed since the election? Had

not the Israelis bombed a

Hizbullah base near Baalbek?

"The attack by the resistance (sic) against Israeli soldiers in the occupied territory [of Lebanon] is not a violation of the April understanding. But what the Israeli armed forces did in Baalbek... was a violation - they chose a target very far from the battlefield."

The Americans have argued that if Hezbollah were disarmed, Israel would leave Lebanon alone. Mr Hariri sits forward with impatience. "Are they going to leave Lebanon? Why are they occupying part of our country in the first place? I don't know why. Maybe they want to use this occupation in the peace negotiations... It all depends on Israel. If Mr Netanyahu decides to withdraw from Lebanon and Syria, the peace can take place at any time."

But Mr Netanyahu has stated he will not withdraw from the Golan Heights. "So it means he doesn't want peace," Mr Hariri responds bleakly. "No peace will take place without a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights."

So what of President Bill Clinton who failed to condemn the civilian slaughter in Lebanon last April, who supported Israel's claim that the bloodbath was provoked by Hezbollah? Mr Hariri chooses his words carefully. "The United States is an essential part of the peace process... we would like to see the US play the role of an honest broker. If it does this, peace can be achieved." He concluded: "He should have condemned the massacre at Qana, because nobody can justify the massacre of innocents."



Rafiq Hariri (right) with Nabih Berri, the speaker of Lebanon's parliament. The billionaire Prime Minister has a big personal stake in the rebuilding of Beirut. Photograph: Reuter

Nigerians vent anger over murder of Abiola's wife

MATTHEW TOSTEVIN
Reuter

Lagos - Thousands of Nigerians demonstrated yesterday against the killing of the wife of detained presidential claimant Chief Moshood Abiola, which an opposition alliance called a political assassination.

"Kudirat Abiola assassinated" was the headline in the *National Concord*, a newspaper belonging to Mr Abiola, as the family prepared to bury his wife, a 44-year-old businesswoman.

The university in the western city of Ibadan was closed after police had stopped students from leading several thousand people in protest. Fifty students demonstrated against the government at Mr Abiola's sprawling Lagos mansion as preparations began for the afternoon burial.

"Enough is enough, and the government should be ready to kill all of us," said Bopoola Kayode, president of the polytechnic students' union.

Mrs Abiola, the senior of Abiola's several wives, was shot in the head at close range by unidentified gunmen as her car passed along a Lagos street on Tuesday. Her driver was also killed.

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Victims of the upsurge in political violence

Since Nigeria was plunged into crisis by the annulment of the 1993 elections, the number of killings with no apparent motive or theft has risen sharply.

June 1994: A former intelligence chief, Vice-Admiral Babatunde Elelede, was killed in Nigeria's biggest city, Lagos.

October 1995: Retired politician Alfred Rewete died from a single bullet to the heart. Police blamed armed robbers, despite speculation that the attack might have had other motives.

February 1996: Alex Ibru, the publisher of Nigeria's leading independent newspaper, *Standard*,

being shot in the head while driving on a Lagos street. A shadowy group claimed responsibility, saying the shooting was to protect the interest of Nigeria's northern rulers.

May 1996: Emmanuel Ijotun, director of administration at the central bank, was shot dead at his Lagos home. A week earlier, he had escaped another attempt on his life. The same month, Rear-Admiral Olu Omotekunwa, a retired naval officer, was killed at his home, also in Lagos.

June 1996: Kudirat Abiola (picture left) was killed by a gunman to the head.

National Concord did not speculate further on the killer's motives but exiled members of the main opposition coalition, the National Democratic Coalition, in a statement issued by their London office, also branded Mrs Abiola's murder a political assassination.

Nigeria's military ruler, General Sani Abacha, yesterday sent a letter of condolence to Mr Abiola's family, along with a high-powered delegation led by the chief of army staff, Major General Ishaya Bamaiyi, and including eight government ministers.

The letter said: "It is with

great shock that I received the news... the federal government will do everything within its power to unravel the mystery of Kudirat's death," the letter said.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation with well over 100 million people, has been in crisis since former military rulers annulled a June 1993 election deemed to have been won by Mr Abiola. The millionaire businessman has been detained on treason charges in the capital, Abuja, since June 1994 when he proclaimed himself as president.

She had said she last saw him in October 1994.

Hundreds of Muslims in traditional black mourning robes prayed incessantly at Mr Abiola's home yesterday.

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international

Outrage at the Black Virgin's dark past

PHIL DAVISON

Latin America Correspondent

On 12 December 1531, according to Catholic historians, an event occurred on a Mexican hilltop which changed the face of the Americas. Or did it? Occur, that is. The question is rocking Latin America.

The Catholic abbot in charge of one of Latin America's holiest shrines, the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City, promised to resign yesterday after implying that a peasant's 1531 vision of the "Black Virgin of Guadalupe" may have been a con by the *conquistadores*.

It has been said before, particularly by Protestant preachers, but this was the guardian of the renowned Basilica, to which millions of Roman Catholics make pilgrimages every year, often approaching for hundreds of yards on their knees to show their devotion to the Black Virgin, Mexico's patron saint. Believers were outraged.

Abbot Guillermo Schulemberg, 81, appointed to the post directly by the Pope in 1963, insists he maintains his faith in the Virgin and was questioning only the historical existence of Juan Diego, the Indian said to have had the vision. But that still caused uproar among Catholics who revere Juan Diego, beatified by Pope John Paul in 1990 during a visit to the Basilica.

"It's like an American doubting the existence of Abraham Lincoln," said one Mexican. "The abbot is to give his resignation to the Pope in October. Some Mexicans believe the abbot has been "set up" by rival archbishops in a power struggle over the Basilica's huge

income. A Mexican weekly news magazine, *Proceso*, recently published photographs of luxury houses Abbot Schulemberg reportedly owns in Mexico City, and noted that he had a taste for expensive cars.

Church sources say the abbot had hoped to create a separate diocese for the Basilica, which currently has a large degree of financial autonomy but which falls within the diocese of Mexico City. The city's archbishop, Norberto Rivera, might prefer to take complete control of the Basilica. Catholic pilgrims donate millions of dollars to the shrine annually.

Basilica priests deny it, but many Mexicans believe the Basilica takes a cut of the profits from countless Black Virgin trinkets and portraits sold by vendors outside the shrine.

Vendor earn up to 500 pesos (245) a day – more than 20 times the minimum wage.

Other Mexicans blame the country's president, Ernesto Zedillo, for stoking the controversy as a distraction from his government's social, political and economic problems.

It was on December 12, 1531, a decade after the conquest by Cortes, that the humble Indian peasant, visiting the ancient Aztec shrine to the Goddess Tonantzin (Mother God) outside Tenochtitlan (Mexico City), reportedly had a vision of a "Black virgin" with the face of an Indian. Whether by choice or force the historians do not specify, but the Indian man had already adopted a Spanish name, Juan Diego.

Miraculously, after a decade of failing to win over local hearts and minds, the Spaniards had



The Black Virgin of Guadalupe: An Indian peasant's vision, or a *conquistadores*' con trick? Mary Evans Picture Library

very much in evidence today.

The Black Virgin was traditionally carried into battles on banners. Now she clings from taxi drivers' rear view mirrors. Pilgrims buy Black Virgin table lamps and Black Virgin soap.

The abbot's controversial theory is not new and was reportedly known by other church leaders for years.

The scandal broke when Abbot Schulemberg was quoted in the Italian magazine *30 Giorni* (30 Days) last month: "Juan Diego is more of a symbol than a reality," he said. Right or wrong, the abbot seems to have lost the battle with believers.

European defence: Security fears grow in countries bordering Russia

East faces division over membership of Alliance

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

An emerging deal with Russia to allow a limited expansion of Nato into central and eastern Europe runs the risk of dividing the region into winners and losers. Countries that stand to gain include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, which are the most likely candidates for early Nato membership; while countries whose security problems may increase if the deal goes through include the Baltic states and Ukraine.

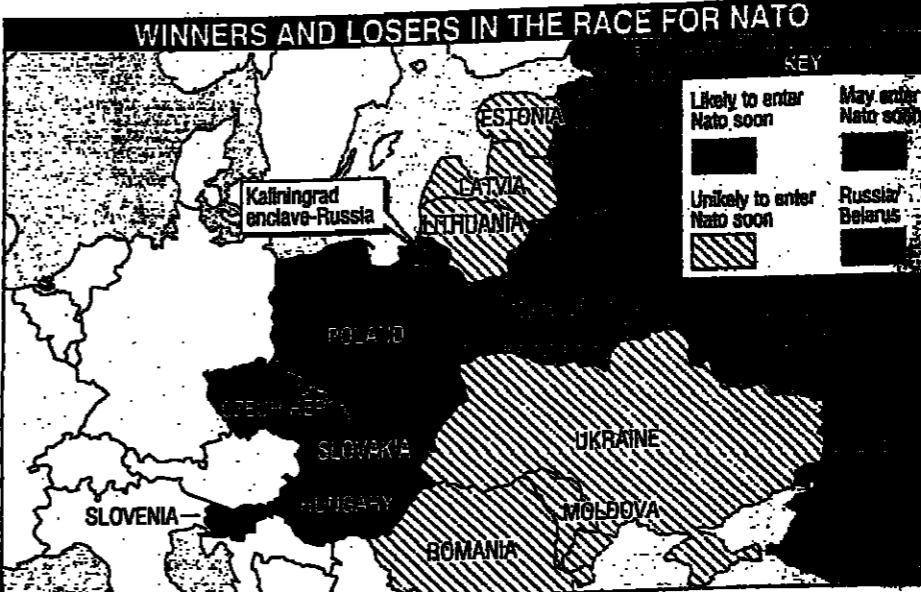
According to some Nato officials, Russia's Foreign Minister, Yevgeny Primakov, indicated to alliance leaders in Berlin on Tuesday that the Kremlin would not resist Nato's expansion provided that nuclear weapons and Western military bases and troops were not brought into new member states. Such states would, however, enjoy the full collective security guarantee that comes with Nato membership.

Publicly, Nato says there is no deal with Russia and that the terms of membership are a matter exclusively for Nato's 16 national governments and the candidate countries. However, Nato officials acknowledge that it is unrealistic to address such an important security issue without taking Russian concerns into account.

Although Nato is reluctant to name the countries that will be admitted first, there appears to be a tacit understanding with Russia that they will be the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and possibly Slovakia.

This is because, broadly speaking, they lie some distance from Russia's frontiers and are seen as successful young democracies with strong Western historical and cultural traditions.

The scandal broke when Abbot Schulemberg was quoted in the Italian magazine *30 Giorni* (30 Days) last month: "Juan Diego is more of a symbol than a reality," he said. Right or wrong, the abbot seems to have lost the battle with believers.



over Slovakia's entry into Nato because the US and European Union are dissatisfied with the quality of Slovak democracy.

Even if Moscow has reluctantly accepted that the Czechs, Hungarians and Poles will join Nato, the Russians are unlikely to let the alliance get off scot-free. For one thing, Nato's expansion would render redundant the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, which was based on European military and political arrangements that would no longer exist.

Nato recognises the need for some changes to the CFE treaty, but if it lapsed altogether Russia could see a chance to rearm and redouble its efforts at turning the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), made up of all former Soviet republics except the Baltic states, into a military alliance. Russia might also refuse to ratify the START-2 treaty on reducing intercontinental nuclear weapons.

According to Russian defence sources, Nato's enlargement could cause Russia to target new member states with tactical nuclear weapons. One Polish scenario anticipates ex-

tra Russian forces in neighbouring Belarus and nuclear weapons on Russian submarines in the Baltic Sea.

Moreover, Estonia and Latvia in particular have difficult relations with Russia, partly because both contain large ethnic Russian minorities.

Yet Western states, especially the Nordic countries, do not wish Moscow to gain the impression that Nato is indifferent to the fate of the Baltic states.

A US think-tank, the RAND Corporation, has proposed that the three countries enhance their stability by strengthening security ties with Nordic states and joining the EU.

However, the inescapable fact is that such steps would give the Baltic states the collective security guarantee that is the most precious element of Nato membership. As for Ukraine, Nato's expansion up to its borders would put it under Russian pressure to join a common CIS defence, something the Ukrainians are keen to avoid.

Limited Nato enlargement may pose problems for Bulgaria and Romania. Russia views the part of the Balkans as an area of traditional influence, and President Boris Yeltsin recently outraged Bulgarians by suggesting their country might like to join the CIS.

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You see in front of you our two new estate cars. Tempted though you might be to purchase both, the chances are that you'll have to make a choice.

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international

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

President Clinton has chosen Admiral Jay Johnson, 50, as the new chief of naval operations, succeeding Jeremy "Mike" Boorda, who committed suicide three weeks ago amid controversy over whether he was entitled to wear Vietnam combat pins in his uniform decoration. Admiral Johnson's nomination as the navy's senior uniformed official is expected to be welcomed within the force, whose morale has been shaken by scandals and misfortunes. Even so, his confirmation by the Senate could fall foul of election-season manoeuvring. The challenges facing Admiral Johnson are numerous, ranging from after-effects of the 1991 *Tailhook* Scandal to mysterious crashes of the Navy's F-14 plane and cheating and drug scandals at the Annapolis academy. *Rupert Cornwell - Washington*

One of the parties in the Turkish ruling coalition decided to support a no-confidence vote, dooming the government of Mesut Yilmaz. If his government falls after Saturday's vote, it could open the way for a pro-Islamic party to take power. Deputies of the centre-right True Path Party decided to vote against their own government after attacks by Yilmaz supporters on their leader, the former prime minister Tansu Ciller. Meanwhile, Parliament voted to investigate the sources of Mrs Ciller's personal wealth. The motion, brought by the pro-Islamic Welfare Party, was also supported by Mr Yilmaz's Motherland. *AP - Ankara*

The former tennis star Ilie Nastase is planning to to switch tactics in politics with the same alacrity he showed in court in his attempt to become mayor of Bucharest. Mr Nastase, who has avoided public debate with rivals and who is apparently trailing after the first round of voting, has agreed to discuss the issue on television with the other remaining candidate. Results were not in four days after Sunday's election but statements from Mr Nastase's camp - the governing Social Democracy Party - and the main opposition alliance indicated the flamboyant ex-tennis star was behind a sober trade unionist who made a virtue of his modest lifestyle. *AP - Bucharest*

The right-winger Benjamin Netanyahu was officially declared winner of Israel's election for prime minister after the High Court rejected a challenge that could have forced a re-vote. The Central Elections Committee confirmed results announced on Friday showing he narrowly beat Shimon Peres. The court was asked to rule that blank ballots among 148,681 voted last week should have been counted as valid. Had they been added to those legally cast, neither Mr Netanyahu nor Mr Peres would have won more than half the votes and a second round of voting would have been necessary. *Reuters - Jerusalem*

Moroccan police arrested 22 people after a riot in the northern city of Tangier where hundreds of people set fire to one bank and ransacked another. The riot coincided with a general strike, which paralysed much of the country's economic activity. Witnesses said that the Societe Generale des Banques du Maroc branch was gutted in the fire in a poor district of Bni Makada in Tangier, which was hit by serious rioting in December 1990 during another general strike. The rioters reportedly said their action was a protest against the government's social policy. It was the first general strike since 1990, when 44 people were killed in riots. *Reuters - Tangier*



lashpoint: Forest fires by the shore of Birch Lake, north of Anchorage, Alaska. By yesterday, the blaze had consumed more than 6,000 tinder-dry acres. Up to 1,000 people had been evacuated from their homes, although between 50 and 100 were destroyed. The estimated cost of the damage was at least \$28m

Photograph: Stephen Nowers

Redneck keeps the Klan fire burning

CAROLINA DAYS

Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult," says the sign outside the old Echo theatre in Laurens, but risqué movies are not the feature attraction. If only they were, wish lost inhabitants of this small at God-fearing town in the hills of South Carolina's 'p Country. At the Echo these days, the fare is not so much X-rated as Triple-K. Where once you picked up popcorn, you can now buy memorabilia of the Ku Klux Klan.

It is three months since John

Howard, a Klansman of 30

years, opened the Redneck

shop in the Echo's former

home to raise money for what

planned as the world's first

KKK museum. A range of ma-

terial is on offer, from Sassy

and T-shirts (the Confederate

accompanying the in-

scription, "If you don't like my

flag you can kiss my rebel ass," to ones that are blatantly offensive: "The Klan is getting bigger. Ain't you glad you're not a nigger." Embossed KKK knives go for \$26.50 (£17). There are old signs from segregation times warning "No Dogs, Negroes, Mexicans" and portraits of luminaries such as as General Nathan Forrest, the Klan's first Wizard in 1866, and William Joseph Simmons, organiser of the Klan's first revival in 1915.

Business may be slow - not

a single other customer ap-

peared when I was there this

week. But a town has been tra-

nsformed, and old wounds of the

South have been re-opened.

The Redneck Shop plainly

serves as an enlistment centre for the Klan. Most chilling of all, a caller to the number printed on the shop's business cards is met by a KKK recruiting mes-

sage, spewing abuse at "nigger

hordes" who want to "breed

with your beautiful young

daughters" to produce a race of

welfare recipient mongrels".

Whatever else though, Mr

Howard is not a quitter. He has

endured demonstrations by the

dozen; even Jesse Jackson has

come to Laurens to protest. In

late March a driver deliberately

crashed his van into the store,

wrecking the windows and caus-

ing \$9,800 of damage, but Mr

Howard was back in business the

same afternoon. For fear of a

boycott the local bank has closed

his account, but still his doors re-

main open.

Mr Howard does not, how-

ever, take kindly to the media.

"I don't make no statements,"

he snarled at me from behind the

counter. "I want nothing to

do with journalists, not one of

them ever printed nothing but

lies about me." His argument is

that warts and all, the Klan is a

part of the Southern history.

And if Louis Farrakhan is al-

lowed to rail against whites and

Jews, why cannot he run a

souvenir shop?

The old Ku Klux Klan of

course is dead. Blacks have the

vote and schools are integrated.

Across the South, blacks serve

in police forces which once

were Klan accomplices, and ci-

vil liberties groups keep permanent watch on right-wing hate

movements. Probably only a few

thousand Klansmen are left, be-

longing to organisations with

names like the Invisible Empire

and the International Keystone

Order of the KKK, in which

Howard holds the rank of

Grand Dragon. Compare that

to 5 million members at the

KKK's height in the 1920s, or

even the 100,000 active Klans-

men during its last renaissance,

between the Supreme Court de-

segregation ruling of 1954 and

the civil rights legislation of the

mid-1960s. But if the Wizards,

Cyclops and Dragons have scat-

tered to the winds, their phi-

losophy lives on.

South Carolina has led the re-

cent spate of arson attacks

against black churches across the

old Confederacy - in one of

which an arrested suspect was

carrying a Klan membership

card. As a growing number of

minority movements attest, white

supremacy is anything but

dead. At about the time as Mr

Howard started business, Ameri-

cans were appalled by a video-

tape of a white South Carolina

state trooper cursing and beat-

ing a black female motorist he

had stopped for speeding.

And now the Redneck Shop

and museum, summoning a past

which the oldest can still re-

member - of church burnings

and bands of hooded, white-

robed horsemen roaming the

fields by night, terrorising the

black population. But Mr

Howard is not apologetic. "The

only people I've had problems

with, who took it as an insult and

a racial situation, have been

blacks," he told *Time* magazine

a few weeks ago, when he still

gave interviews. "I didn't know

that blacks were so prejudiced."

Rupert Cornwell



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So which is it to be? A Mercedes estate or a Mercedes estate?

Ah, decisions decisions.



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the leader page

We must start planning for an urban future

We don't, in Britain, think much about cities. At the international Habitat conference taking place this week in Istanbul, there is by contrast big and exciting talk about the urban future - why such once uncontrollable cities as Calcutta and São Paulo have calmed down; what impact wiring and electronic communications will have on the mental life of cities; how cities are to be sustained, and their voracious needs contained.

None the less, there are UK cities that think big. Glasgow, the former European City of Culture, has come to define itself as a mecca for arts tourists. Birmingham and Manchester celebrate their multiple personalities as regional capitals and, increasingly, European metropoles. Birmingham may not quite be a city charmed by music, but what prouder symbol of transformation is there than a world-class orchestra created by Sir Simon Rattle.

Thanks to Symphony Hall, parts of central Birmingham have become newly desirable - for that hard-to-define population of younger people and the pizza-delivers and club-owners who cater to them. Flats are being bought and rented; housing associations and private developers are sizing up opportunities. The flight from the centre starts to reverse itself. If there is a lesson, it is not about "planning" in the sense of a government man with a map. It is about the creation of opportunities -

commercial and cultural, intertwined - that have a prospect of being realised in their natural urban environment.

There is a delightful serendipity in the way that cultural development spins off economic and housing development. That is not at all the same as saying, leave it to the market. Markets don't normally build symphony orchestras. What has been happening in Birmingham owes a lot to the determination and consistency of the city council. Public money matters. The imagination of city leaders (public and private) also matters.

What Birmingham's example says is that we need to revise our conception of planning. What government can do is lay down frameworks within which market-led development can take its own course; private interest can be puffed to public purpose. This is the model of planning needed as we follow the Environment Secretary John Gummer's advice of yesterday and start to think about where housing is going to go to contain the huge growth in household numbers projected by his officials. Mr Gummer, too, could benefit from some advice.

He must not blind himself, let alone us, with overly precise figures about the growth of this or that kind of household. We cannot forecast precisely how society will adapt to changed expectations, because households are artificial constructs. There is clearly a dynamic relationship between the availa-



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ability of homes to live in and people's willingness to leave their parents, get divorced, set up on their own. Fewer houses and flats is likely to mean fewer households. We must not think "concealed" households - lodgers, adult children living at home, latter-day communes - are necessarily bad things.

And some of the projections appear innocent of economics. Unless house prices rise significantly faster, developers simply will not build. The market is going to have to signal a good deal more energetically than it does now that household demand is rising.

That said, space will have to be

found for more homes. That does not entail some great renaissance of Planning, with a capital, dirigiste P. In some quarters there is talk of new garden cities and huge infrastructure schemes. But they would require the rebirth of Big Government, and where is the mandate for that? Stevenage and Crawley and most of the other New Towns worked. Government showed itself able to create value by developing empty land and selling it, to house-holders and industry. But that was then. Government now has to go with the flow of private development.

One government duty is to ensure

that the supply of housing affordable by those on lower incomes is kept up. That means making it easier for private landlords to let while subsidising social landlords. Imaginative local authorities have cut deals with developers that reserve land for housing associations. Government financial rules should make these easier not harder.

Planning is essentially a local matter. It is for local authorities to zone and developers and their customers to identify sites for building. Central government is the court of appeal. If planning pressures are going to grow, Mr Gummer and his successor would be well advised to streamline the process of inspection and final judgement.

Also, there is a proper national concern for greenery, in the form of green belts and the like. But beyond this, we can afford a much more relaxed attitude towards housing development elsewhere in the "country" than the Council for the Protection of Rural England would have us believe.

Finally, government must attend to the South-east. This is and will remain the site of greatest tension between demand, supply and the desire of the haves to keep others out. Here is where Mr Gummer has shown himself unfit. The Tories are captive to their past experience with the Greater London Council. They cannot see that there is no solution to planning disputes in the South-east - London's hinterland

- without London's interest being given voice and weight. Ministers cannot ventriloquise that voice. Something vital goes missing if London is not involved in the debates about transport, or about infilling "brown" city land. Mr Gummer said yesterday he wants to start a debate about where the housing for the new households is to go. Let him end the Tory obduracy on how the London conurbation is governed. Let him start thinking city.

Queen of American hearts

What is it with Americans? A foreign princess flies in and they treat her as if she were one of the Fab Four. It's clear why some on this side of the Atlantic have cheered the Princess of Wales so heartily. She has helped the monarchy face up to the modern world, which is good for our country and extremely entertaining in the process. But why US Di-Fever? This is a woman who calls herself "Queen of Hearts," and who poses for photos at a child's heart transplant op. Her life and conversation are therapy-enriched. Hugging is her cure-all. She is famous for being famous... Hmm. Perhaps it's no surprise that Americans are welcoming her. She's becoming one of them.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How Britain can shape a future Europe

Sir: The last word in your excellent essay on Britain and Europe (3 June) is the most important and potent. That word is "confederacy". It is good and encouraging that a national newspaper now understands the case for - indeed, says it will raise the standard for - a confederate Europe.

As you also point out, we have always been deeply involved in Europe. "Pulling out" is a meaningless concept. As for the cry that we are "bad Europeans", not only have we spent more blood and sweat keeping Europe free, and saving it from destruction, than any other European nation, but we are today far the best performer when it comes to putting in place the single market regulations and observing them.

So all that is lacking is the confidence to shape an enlarged Europe as the decentralised confederation of nation states most of its people long for it to be. We cannot do that alone but we can work with the countries of Central Europe and Scandinavia, as well as with the feelings of millions of German, French, Spanish and Italian people, to achieve that kind of settled European system, with delegated power at the centre carefully circumscribed, in place of the restless and outmoded visions of the federalists.

DAVID HOWELL, MP
Guildford, Con
House of Commons
London SW1

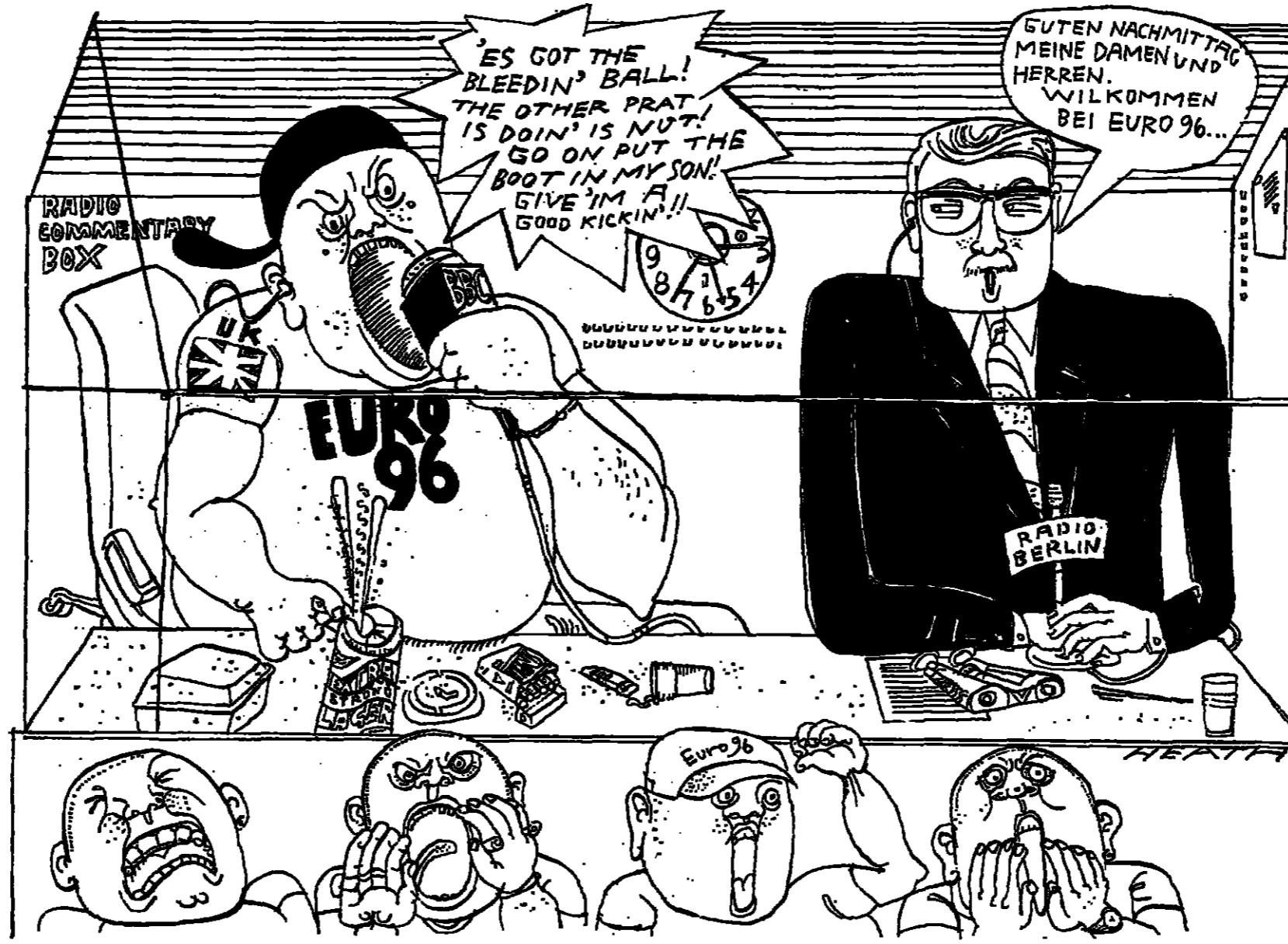
The writer is chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee

Sir: Because I believe in the sovereignty of the people, I have been an ardent internationalist and ractioner in European cooperation for 40 years. It is for these very reasons that I oppose the treaties. Supporters of the European movement say they do not want a "federal Europe". Of course not, for the treaties do not provide it. Instead, they have already created a more rigid, unitary political structure than any federation.

Taken together, the treaties form a proto-constitution, which not only prescribes the powers of the central institutions, but also requires them and the member states to pursue a specific political programme. The "no frontier", internally controlled market in every conceivable commodity, and their related conditions, require uniting and compulsory competition between peoples, firms, cities and regions, thus king money. This system poses limits on the means of sing and options on spending, national taxation. Simultaneously gives wide scope to central authority for the distribution of gains from automatic, increasingly harmonised and centrally collected revenues.

Common economic and world commercial policies are now forced by that for foreign and security issues, all being co-ordinated by the Commission. A single currency with an accountable central bank is a commitment of all but two member states.

Democratic freedoms can only be maintained if governments and parliaments cannot, or do not, do their successors. Thus the



treaties have eliminated electoral sovereignty over vast areas of legislative and financial policy.

Unfortunately the means adopted to deliver a democratic, peaceful, harmonious and secure Europe for the next century and beyond are not only likely to have the opposite effects, but they also risk the destruction of those very freedoms which the Second World War was fought to defend and secure.

NIGEL SPEARING MP
(Newham South, Lab)
House of Commons
London SW1

This letter is from a "morally wrong and intellectually disgraceful" reader who read your long editorial today ("Britain and Europe: a proposal", 3 June).

In reality I found I could agree with virtually the entire article

apart from the libel on myself. The

first section was an excellent

summary of our shared historical

backgrounds which, as you rightly

wrote, even Euro-sceptics

acknowledge. But how do we get

from there to European political

union? Because lots of English and

French and Germans like

Beethoven does it mean we should

have a single currency? I don't see

the connection.

You say that the "anti-European crusaders" would also claim to be Europe-lovers but that, in reality, they are xenophobes. Well, this one speaks French and Spanish and is married to a foreigner. I even speak Spanish at home.

And what does the rest of the article say? It says that political union would not be democratic, that it would foster violence, that you are against a single currency, that the European project has

been shrouded in deliberate mystery from the start, that the CAP should be abolished, that nations should retain border checks, that social policy should not go to the centre. Now, if I were to say that I would no doubt be swiftly dismissed as a xenophobic little-Englishman.

There is only one snag with your reasoned suggestions for reform. Nothing like such a possibility is on the table. Our partners would never agree to that. So where does that leave us?

The conclusion seems clear to me - shall I send you a membership application form for the UK Independence Party?

PETER GARDNER
UK Independence Party
Oxford

Sir: I would caution you on your idea of what would constitute a democratic Europe. In your Europe of government leaders, where are the elections? Where is the voice of the people?

Far better to give the European Parliament equal legislative power with the Council, and a greater role in appointing and holding to account the Commission. What the people of Europe are used to is a parliamentary democracy, where divisions can be on political rather than on purely national lines. The elections to the European Parliament are then the opportunity to resolve debates on a Europe-wide scale, providing a popular mandate for the difficult decisions that surely lie ahead.

This is the federalist vision of

Europe: a Europe for everybody, not just for politicians.

RICHARD LAMING

Director, Federal Union
London SW1

Sir: May I add a gloss to Andreas Whitman Smith's article (4 June)? I am by conviction as well as statute a citizen of Europe. I am, by ties of sentiment and blood, a Scot. I am also, by accident of birth, a subject of HM Elizabeth II, head of a state called the United Kingdom. It seems, sadly, that the last of these is becoming less and less compatible with the other two.

R G BAIRD

Edinburgh

world problems" - I have yet to meet a scientist who was not firmly rooted in the real world.

It does not do to claim that market performance is a "stricter" test: in science, market forces are notoriously an inadequate and biased criterion. The benefits of applied science are far too unpredictable and quixotic to be assessed in economic terms - except with hindsight. As for the promised benefits to scientists (better financial rewards and other goodies), many scientists know to me (I am retired, and so disinterested) would gladly give up a little financial reward in return for better protection of their integrity, and more freedom to choose the direction of their research.

Dr ALAN COCK

Department of Biology

Southern University

followed. Even the then august sociology journal *New Society* lost patience with the CPAG as long ago as 1986. Quoting figures from my letter to the *Independent* (9 November 1986), the journal castigated the group for exaggerating the extent of poverty, which it had claimed totalled 16.4 million (including those "on the margins of poverty").

Now we have the Rowntree Foundation telling us that 14 million people are in "poverty".

This looks an improvement on the 1986 figure, though a different definition of poverty has been used. Nowadays if your income is below half the average "equivalised" (adjusted) household income you are deemed to be poor. Thus, "poverty" is now defined merely by inequality in incomes.

What does this definition of poverty tell us about the actual level of income poor people survive on? It is not immediately obvious. It is even more difficult to imagine what gross wage one must earn to escape poverty. Which is why I have produced a table of poverty thresholds giving examples of what poverty means in 1996 (*Liverpool Quarterly Economic Bulletin*, published next week). It turns out that, for example, a couple with three children living in a £70,000 semi in some leafy suburb earning £20,000 a year can be regarded as poor under the JRF definition.

The new inequality definition of poverty, in again exaggerating the extent of the problem in Britain, will be as counter-productive in creating concern for the genuinely poor as the original CPAG definition was.

PAUL ASHTON

Eastbourne, East Sussex

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PAUL ASHTON

Eastbourne, East Sussex

Computers better than calligraphy

Sir: Your report (Education, 30 May) on the teaching of "joined up writing" in a number of English schools was little short of astonishing. What next? Quill pens? Hieroglyphics? And as for encouraging the use of fountain pens, I can only suppose that the initiative is sponsored by detergent manufacturers or clothes shops.

The written word is one of the fundamental tools of learning and communication, but I cannot think of a book in current circulation, or a computer, which uses anything other than single-character letterforms.

In the last 150 years we have seen the quill replaced by the steel pen, then the ball-point and its contemporary variations. Of these, the steel pen was the last to be used widely for the production of documents - those ledgers and fair copies with which the Victorians laid the foundations of modern business practice - as first the typewriter and then the word processor evolved.

In the past week I have written, for reading by others, more than 10,000 words, of which approximately 9,950 were written using a computer keyboard. The other 50 were almost entirely written on sticky notes: simple messages such as "Back at 2pm".

Over the same period, I have received a number of letters and reports from business people and academics in which instances of poor grammar, incorrect usage and inadequate vocabulary rendered the meaning uncertain.

We should be teaching children how to express ideas and information properly, and leave calligraphy as an option in the handicraft syllabus.

KEN WELSBY
London E14

Figures for BSE

Sir: Terry Price's letter (30 May) calls for full disclosure of the "scientific facts" about BSE. During the year of the Great Plague in 1665, incidence figures for the London parishes were published weekly. During the foot and mouth epidemic in recent memory incidence figures were also published regularly.

If weekly, or at least monthly, incidence figures were presented about BSE then consumers, our European partners and any other interested people could deduce the extent of the problem and assess how quickly it was being overcome.

Mrs MURIEL BROOK

Dorking, Surrey

Vocal warning
Sir: The "road rage" of Balala against his ass (Numbers, 22) referred to by the Rev Barry Etherington (Letters, 1 June) is more like that which John Cleese takes out against his obstinate car. This was, moreover, no "dumb animal" but an example of divine ventriloquism.

A practical lesson to be drawn might be to invent a device

Lucas bid battle looms as BBA steps in

PATRICK TOOHER

The prospect of an all-out bidding war for Lucas intensified yesterday after the engineering group BBA said it was considering a rival takeover approach for the UK automotive and aerospace group.

BBA is expected to swoop with a hostile bid for Lucas within the next few days, though other companies, including Germany's Mannesmann, may also enter the fray.

News of BBA's interest casts a long shadow over the agreed £3.2bn merger Lucas announced only five days ago with Vary of the US. This would create the world's second largest brakes manufacturer.

BBA, which at £1.2bn is only half the size of Lucas and about the same in market capitalisation terms as Vary, is expected to fund the deal with a paper offer, though a partial cash alternative is also likely to be made.

Lucas was scathing about BBA's ability to fund such a deal. A spokesman said: "There is no meaningful industrial case for a combination of BBA and Lucas. Furthermore, to make a credible offer for Lucas, BBA would be financially stretched to the limit with no ability to develop its businesses." Lucas advised shareholders to take no action until further notice.

The increased likelihood of a bid battle pushed shares in Lucas 8p higher to 254p, but

fears of a huge rights issue sent BBA 21.5p lower to 295.5p. Sources in the City said BBA would have to pay a hefty premium to win Lucas. They said many of the 15 or so institutional investors who control more than 60 per cent of Lucas side with its view that the Vary deal would create a financially sound grouping that had a strong position in the competitive global auto industry.

But assuming a rival deal can be financed, BBA's cause may

not be a lost one. One analyst said: "[Investors] hearts will want them to go one way with Vary but they may well think in their heads that a premium-priced offer better for their funds' performance."

Analysts also speculated that if BBA launched a bid it would be forced to sell the aerospace and diesel divisions of Lucas for around £500m to make the deal more affordable. However, BBA is understood to have no such plans at the moment.

Analysts also doubted that the industrial logic of the Lucas merger with Vary could be bettered by BBA. Lucas and Vary are strongly focused on the automotive sector, especially brakes and diesel systems, though BBA's main trump card is its friction unit, which is the market leader in Europe for car and truck brake pads.

This division had sales of around £300m a year and could strengthen Lucas by providing it with an integrated source of friction material for its brake systems, they said.

Lucas Vary will employ more than 56,000 and have combined sales of £4.5bn. The merger creates one of the world's top 10 automotive suppliers, producing brakes, diesel engines and fuel systems, vehicle electronics and avionics.

Under the terms of the deal Lucas shareholders will receive 62 per cent of the enlarged capital, and Vary shareholders 38 per cent. The deal is not ex- pected to be completed by September, leaving a small window of opportunity for a rival.

Linde was another German engineering group mentioned yesterday as a possible suitor for Lucas, though Munich-based electronics giant Siemens rule itself out of the running.

BBA is no stranger to hostile bids. Last year it took control of Swiss fibre and paper group Holz from under the nose of International Paper of the US.

Comment, page 2

Courtaulds sacks its chief executive

JOHN WILLCOCK

Courtaulds Textiles has sacked its chief executive, Noel Jervis, and replaced him with executive director Colin Dyer, in a bid to improve the group's performance following its May profit warning.

Mr Jervis could receive around £500,000 compensation for being ousted from Courtaulds, where he has worked for 30 years, all his working life. The talks could last another fortnight.

John Eccles, Courtaulds' chairman, said: "Noel had an extremely good grasp of the industry, great ideas and the ability to see into the future."

"But implementation was not his strong point."

He added: "He was strong on what we had to do, but weak on actually doing it. When we issued our profits warning in May there was a downgrading of forecasts (by analysis of our results). We had to look seriously at how we could change the situation and we came to the

conclusion that a change of leadership would help." Mr Eccles insisted there had been no pressure from institutional investors to sack Mr Jervis.

Courtaulds' shares dived a penny to 378p on the news.

The chairman said Mr Jervis had been earning £200,000-£250,000 a year and was on a two-year rolling contract. He said the company is currently in talks with its legal advisors and a decision on the exact amount of Mr Jervis' pay-off will be made shortly.

Six years after the demerger with Courtaulds, Mr Eccles said that the company has to continue to sharpen its focus on key clients like Marks & Spencer, and speed up moving out of businesses which are not core activities. "We have to continue to move our activities offshore into lower cost economies."

The board, he said, had reviewed the position of the company against the background of "difficult trading market over the last year" and had decided that while the group's strategy

was sound, the pace of change needed to be speeded up.

The directors thank Noel for his contribution to the company over his long period of service," he said.

The group's main areas, he said, will continue to include lace products, stretch and performance fabrics, other contract clothing, branded clothing and home furnishings and supplying Marks & Spencer.

Mr Dyer, who replaces Mr Jervis, is 43 and joined Courtaulds in 1982. His promotion to chief executive is from the position of executive director responsible for branded and own-label clothes, the firm said.

Mr Dyer's pay package has not yet been determined. His existing rolling two-year contract is worth £150,000-£200,000 a year.

Courtaulds Textiles said trading continued in line with its statement issued on 1 May. Then the group said an expected loss in its US operations would drag down group profits in the first half of 1996.

Comment, page 23

Company man: Noel Jervis, who could receive £500,000 in compensation. He had worked for Courtaulds for 30 years

Watchdog casts fresh doubt on Energy sale

MAGNUS GRIMOND and MICHAEL HARRISON

A fresh shadow was cast over the flotation of British Energy last night after Scottish Power warned that it might re-open a key nuclear electricity contract with the generator.

The warning followed an announcement from the industry regulator, Professor Stephen Littlechild, calling for price cuts of between 3 and 5 per cent for business and industrial users north of the border.

The director general of Ofcom criticised Scottish Power and the other Scottish generator, Hydro-Electric, saying there was too little competition and warning failure to reach agreement on price cuts would lead to a referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

But Scottish Power and Scottish Hydro, which dominate electricity supply in Scotland, dismissed his claims and said the best way to cut prices would be to renegotiate the contract with Scottish Nuclear, part of British Energy, under which they are forced to buy nuclear-generated electricity at above market rates until 2005.

That would put a big question mark over British Energy's privatisation, as the company supplies half the electricity used in Scotland and any reduction in prices is likely to have a significant impact on profits.

Offer yesterday denied that its intervention now had been to get round a "gagging order" to be included in British Ener-

gy's pathfinder prospectus due to be published on Monday. A spokeswoman said Professor Littlechild would not be gagged, but admitted that the prospectus would contain a list of forthcoming statements from Offer and a warning that he retained the right to deal with unforeseen events.

In a statement, the regulator said that customers, suppliers and others had expressed concern about the development of electricity competition in Scotland, highlighting the lower penetration of suppliers to the business market than in England and Wales.

The practice under which the two Scottish companies were meant to make electricity available to alternative suppliers at the current pool-market price was not working, he said, and was therefore no longer appropriate.

He therefore proposed that the price of electricity bound for the competitive second-tier market should be based on a formula which in England and Wales resulted in a level around 6 per cent lower than the pool selling price.

In Scotland, customers in the competitive market could expect to see cuts of between 3 and 5 per cent.

The move angered the two Scottish companies, as they will continue to be forced to buy the highly priced nuclear-generated electricity but suffer selling price cuts which they are unable to recover from customers due to increased competition.

SwissAir appeared to have won the lengthy battle for the Alders duty free business yesterday when it increased its offer to £160m, trumping an improved £145m deal made by

BAA when it said it was "not willing" to increase its offer any further. The company said it was not prepared to "spend shareholders' money on an unrealistic valuation." A spokesman for SwissAir's advisers, SBC War-

burg, was understandably more upbeat. "It looks like the end of the story," he said.

SwissAir's *coup de grace*

capped a day of dramatic events which saw both companies increase their offers within hours of each other.

BAA led the way when it increased its original £130m deal by £15m to match SwissAir's proposal. SwissAir then trumped it with a £160m offer in the afternoon.

It is not yet clear whether or not BAA will withdraw its lower offer or still present it to

Alders shareholders at an emergency meeting which is due to take place next Monday. BAA is expected to decide today if it will withdraw.

Analysts also doubted that the meeting does take place and the offer is voted down, another meeting will have to be convened to approve the SwissAir deal.

Licking its wounds, BAA

had seen it already stated that it could see other ways in which it could develop its duty free business and would now explore those alternatives.

The auction has been good

news for Alders shareholders, who saw the group's shares rise a further 16p to 216p yesterday. Alders said: "We acknowledge that there is now a firm offer on the table from SwissAir. We now have to resolve some of the technical issues relating to that offer as quickly as possible in order to confidently put it to our shareholders in a form which is capable of being approved."

SwissAir representatives said they were confident they could make the Alders International business pay at the £160m

valuation. They said SwissAir recognised that the UK airport outlets would not be part of the deal as the management contracts will be taken up by BAA, which operates the airports. It also recognises that duty free shopping may disappear in Europe from 1999. However, they said that the store rental agreements were due for re-negotiation at the same time and that the new deal would reflect any European Union decision.

The company added that airport retailing is a fast-growing market.

The company runs two popular London radio stations, Capital AM and FM – and plans to expand further in the UK and overseas. Commercial radio is the fastest-growing medium in the UK, and accounts for about 4 per cent of total advertising spend.

Goldman Sachs and Cazenove plan to begin the two-building exercise this week, closing 13 June. It is expected that the shares will receive wide distribution.

However, depending on the price fetched for the stake, analysts expect Capital to attract renewed interest in the camp of predators. Leading the list of potential buyers is Associated Newspapers.

SwissAir wins Allders duty free battle

NIGEL COPE

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Comment, page 23

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Yorkshire postpones buy-back

PETER RODGERS

Beleaguered Yorkshire Water came under fire yesterday from customers and the Labour Party for a substantial increase in profits and dividends last year.

But the company bowed to public outrage about its poor performance during the drought by postponing a planned share buy-back until it has improved its relationship with customers.

The buy-back would have added substantially to the returns for shareholders, but Yorkshire took the sting out of the postponement by promising the City handsome future increases in real dividends of between 6 per cent and 8 per cent each year – or top of inflation – to the year 2000.

This followed a decision to raise the latest year's dividend 12 per cent to 31p a share after an increase in pre-tax profits of 14 per cent to £162.2m. The profit came after extra

drought costs of £47m. Labour called the profits scandalous. Frank Dobson, the shadow environment secretary, said: "Under this government, the privatised companies are allowed to get away with anything – rip off customers, leak one-third of their water, damage the environment – yet they're not properly regulated and they pay next to no tax."

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"Labour will introduce tough regulations to cut the leaks, protect customers and sustain the environment, and we will also impose a windfall levy on the scandalous profits to help finance our plans to provide water and training for young people."

Commenting on the postponed share buy-back, Brian Wilson, Yorkshire's finance director, said: "We believe the balance sheet is inefficient – but we must regain the confidence of customers first."

With takeover rumours in the air, he held out the prospect to the City that a share buy-back was still possible later this year. He said he would be disappointed if "customer confidence" is not restored within this calendar year."

The absence of a buy-back depressed the share price, which fell 16p to 718p.

Bid approach sends Blenheim shares soaring

NIGEL COPE

Blenheim Group, the exhibitions company which has experienced wildly fluctuating fortunes in the past five years, was at the centre of bid speculation yesterday after the company said it had received an approach that might lead to an offer.

Blenheim shares soared 70p to 409p as the market settled on United News and Media as the most likely candidate to make a move. Other possibilities include Reed Elsevier, Emap or an overseas suitor, possibly from the United States.

After its initial statement,

If United did succeed with the deal it would be its first acquisition since the £3bn merger between United and MAI in February.

The current price values Blenheim at £378m, though any formal offer is likely to be at a far higher price as it would need to be an agreed deal. A third of Blenheim's shares are held by the directors and the French group Compagnie Générale des Eaux. Some analysts suggested that an offer price could have to be as high as 470p per share.

made to explain the sharp rise in its share price on Tuesday, Blenheim declined to comment further yesterday.

Blenheim has led a roller-coaster existence in recent years. It was one of the market's glamour stocks in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the share price hit 600p. The company's flamboyant management, led by current chairman Neville Buch, then claimed the company was recession-proof, a comment that came back to haunt them. Recent years have been littered by profits warnings and top level departures as the

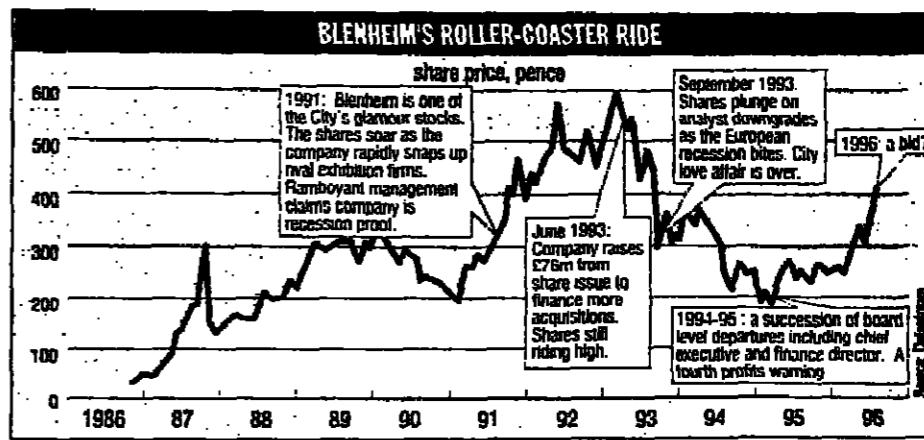
company ran into the downturn. More recently however, there have been signs of improvement and analysts are forecasting profits of £35m.

United News and Media is seen as the most likely predator as it is known to be keen to expand its exhibitions business. At the time of the United-MAI merger, MAI chairman Lord Hollick indicated that there was scope to expand the group's exhibitions business.

Reed and Emap have looked at Blenheim before but at much lower prices than these. Anthony de Larraga, media analyst at

Panmure Gordon said: "The ball is in Lord Hollick's court. Either he can come in quickly with an offer or go away and pretend nothing happened."

United's exhibitions and magazines division, Miller Freeman, organised more than 200 exhibitions last year including one of the world's largest, the Asia Pacific Leather Fair. Last year the exhibitions business recorded profits of £24.6m on sales of £93.6m. It is strongest in the US while Blenheim is a major player in the UK and Europe. Blenheim organised around 200 shows in more than 62 countries last year.



Jarvis Hotels float to raise £133m

NIGEL COPE

Jarvis Hotels, the mid-market hotels group which specialises in leisure breaks, is to be priced at between 150p and 170p per share when it comes to the stock market later this month. The flotation will raise £133m and value the company at £281m at the mid-market price of 160p.

However, analysts believe that the popularity of hotel company floatations and the bullish forecasts for the market will push the price and market value towards the top end of the range.

One analyst said: "You've had the Millennium and Copthorne flotation as well as Macdonald Hotels and others are following. It is a very opportune time to come to the market."

Jarvis Hotels operates 62 hotels in the three-star category. It focuses on the business, conference and short-break leisure market and also runs the Sebastian Cox Health Clubs.

The company will use the fresh funds to reduce its £112m debts to £60m. This will cut gearing from 182 per cent to 29 per cent. Management, led by founder John Jarvis and David Thomas, plan to add around

600 bedrooms to the existing 5,000. Acquisitions are also expected.

Jarvis was created in 1990 following a management buy-in of the 41 Embassy Hotels from Allied Breweries. Its second large deal was the purchase of 20 hotels from Resort Hotels in 1994.

The group's occupancy levels are relatively low at 64 per cent, though the company says this is improving from a low base under previous owners. Its room rates have improved from £36 to £39 in the last year.

Mr Thomas did not give specific details in current trading but said it was "encouraging". Last year the company made pre-tax profits of £9m on sales of £102m.

Three quarters of the company's equity is owned by the venture capital groups Canavero and Electra, which are selling a third of their holdings.

Chief executive John Jarvis is selling almost a million shares, which will net him £1.4m.

David Thomas, deputy chief executive, is selling 330,000 shares which will raise £500,000.

Jarvis has timed its flotation well as the hotels industry is kindly viewed by investors at the moment and forecasts are for strong product demand. Fawell

Kerr Forster is predicting strong demand into the next century. As relatively little new capacity is being added to the market, this will benefit the existing operators. Additionally, demographics are on the side of companies such as Jarvis, which operate the kind of leisure breaks that are popular with older age-groups. Stakis, the hotels company which reported results earlier this week, says some of its customers take 17 such breaks a year.

Mr Thomas confirmed the optimistic view: "It's a good, upbeat market at the moment. Demand is continuous and there is relatively little new capacity."

The pricing values the company on a historic price/earnings ratio of 16. This is not considered cheap but is more competitive than the Millennium and Copthorne listing which was heavily over-subscribed.

The Jarvis listing is a placing with 10 per cent of the shares reserved for intermediaries who have until 20 June to register their applications. Six share shops are handling the issue on behalf of smaller shareholders, including ShareLink in Birmingham. Dealings in the shares are expected to commence on 28 June.

Nationwide ends bonus hopes

CLIFFORD GERMAN

Nationwide, the standard-bearer of mutual building societies, dashed any hopes its members may have had of a windfall bonus yesterday and renewed its commitment to paying "material dividends" in the shape of higher savings rates for investors and cheaper mortgages for borrowers.

It also reported a 33 per cent leap in profits to £459m in the year to 4 April, helped by a 19 per cent drop in bad debt provisions to £124m, a further improvement in cost control for the eighth year in a row, and an

upturn in market share after several years of gradual decline.

Helped mainly by a campaign to attract more business through intermediaries, new lending recovered by 37 per cent, even excluding the acquisition of the UCB Home Loans loan book. The margin between rates charged to borrowers and rates paid out to savers widened slightly in the society's favour from 2.41 per cent to 2.45 per cent and net interest receivable rose by 6 per cent to £907m.

But other income fell by a quarter to £146m, reflecting a fall in income from insurance commissions caused by the

tough competition in the market place. Total income was actually just at £1.05bn.

But the society's administrative costs fell by 7 per cent to £469m and the ratio of costs to income dipped to 44.5 per cent, which is four points below the average of the top 10 societies. Eight years previously it was 65.2 per cent and significantly above the average for the top 10 societies.

The outlook remains good, and should ensure that Nationwide will uphold its promise to pay out £200m worth of internal dividends to its members in the current year.

Racial has been lucky in other areas as well, most appropriately in gambling, which makes up a quarter of group profits. The biggest windfall has come from the group's 22.5 per cent stake in National Lottery operator Camelot, which chipped in profits of £15.2m.

But not all of Sir Ernest's charges

are

in

good

form. Indeed, the shares slipped back 16p to 304p on news that Racial was taking a £20m restructuring charge to cover the costs of getting data products, part of the data communications division, back into the black in 1997-98. A factory in Warrington is closing with the loss of up to 180 jobs, US manufacturing activities are being consolidated on a site in Fort Lauderdale and 17 standalone businesses are coming together.

The potential swing at data products, which lost about £20m last year, could be £35m if Paul Kozlowski, the division's new US boss, presses the right buttons. Shareholders should not hold their breath. For despite its recent success, Racial is developing a reputation for promising jinx tomorrow. For example, the Ministry of Defence is not expected to award the £2bn Bowman army radio contract until 1998, a year later than expected. Racial has no choice but to continue funding half the

100m cost of the project, leading to heavy overruns. House broker NatWest Securities has pared back its 1997 profit forecasts from £86m to £74m, implying a PE ratio of 18. High enough.

food cartons operation. The sale of Plastona should remove the last of Waddington's underperformers and give an immediate boost to results by eliminating trading losses that deepened from £1.7m to £2.4m last year.

Elsewhere, the plastic plates and cutlery side, badly affected by recent raw material price increases, did well to raise profits by a third to £7.3m last year. Pharmaceutical packaging - pill boxes and the like - is another star. Boosted by last year's IP Container purchase in the US, which chipped in the bulk of last year's £2.3m contribution from acquisitions, profits soared from £2.4m to £6.11m. The continued trend to so-called self-medication and over-the-counter medicines suggests the future is set fair for this division.

More questionable is whether the

specialist printing operation, mainly involved in direct marketing to the financial services industry, can sustain its current growth once the boom in building society consolidations and flotation passes. Waddington also has to prove that it can work from big customers like Unilever and Nestle, moving to pan-European sourcing to

over

tightening planning restrictions.

Waddington reckons that it can add between 30 and 40 per cent to the value of waste by, for instance, crushing demolition waste on site, screening out reusable materials and in the process reducing the space required to dispose of the residue of unusable

product.

Meanwhile, the portability of Pow-

erscreen's equipment also gives it an

edge for quarry operators, who are in-

creasingly being limited by planning

rules to the time during which they can

operate sites, making it uneconomical

to install fixed plant.

The company reckons the UK mar-

ket alone is growing at between 25 and

30 per cent and it also sees further

scope for growth in the US, Continental Europe and Asia Pacific.

Group profits close to £42m this year would put the shares at 467p, down 4p, on a forward multiple of 13. Good value, even after their strong run over the past year.

Racial remains on track to offer jam tomorrow

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY MAGNUS GRIMOND

Waddington sheds the losers

John Waddington's fame amongst the general public has always been as maker of Monopoly, the board game, but the City knows it better for its unerring ability to seek out bottom skins.

The games business is long gone and the company must be hoping that its latest set of results means it can also dump its accident-prone reputation.

The figures were distorted by ac-

quisitions and disposals over the past

two years. Stated pre-tax profits fell

from £53.3m to £1.8m in the year to

March, but the previous year included a £30.8m gain on the sale of the

games business, while there was a £1.13m loss on disposals in the latest period.

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German economic winter shows first signs of thaw

IMRE KARACS
Bonn

Although you might need a microscope to spot them, the green shoots of recovery are becoming visible in Germany, raising hopes that the slump of recent months would, as the government predicted, be

tempered. The worst might be over for Germany. Last week the first rise in foreign orders was detected since the end of 1995, and the IFO research institute's business confidence index has also started to climb.

Nevertheless, Günter Rexrodt, the Economics Minister, warned yesterday that the "growth pause", as the government describes its mini-recession, may not have run its full course. "But the

figures released yesterday by the German Economic Ministry show that industrial output bounced back in April by a seasonally adjusted 1.4 per cent, fuelled largely by a powerful surge in the building sector. In the former East Germany, construction activity expanded by 13.2 per cent, although it registered little change in the west.

Improving performance was reflected in the jobless figures. Seasonally adjusted unemployment fell by 62,000 to 3.93 million in April, the first drop in nine months.

The latest figures add to the trickle of statistics indicating

normalisation of the mark and wage moderation in many areas give a hope the economy will come out of its weak phase and return to growth in the medium term," Mr Rexrodt said.

Most economists agree that Germany has been in the middle of an M-shaped curve, with growth inevitably resuming after six months in the doldrums. So far, the cycle is on target. The Federal Statistics Office confirmed yesterday that the economy had shrunk in the first quarter of this year, following a downturn in the last quarter of 1995. By Anglo-Saxon standards, two successive quarters of negative growth add up to a recession, but Bonn insists on a less rigorous definition.

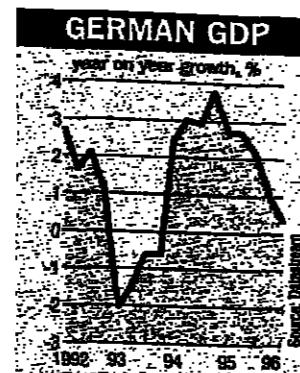
Either way, the government had budgeted for stagnation, and received instead a 0.5 per cent fall in the two successive quarters. The discrepancy is blamed on the long, hard winter, which froze the building sector. The question is whether the

latest upswing should be attributed to the sunny weather or to economic recovery.

The government points to an improving economic climate, especially the falling mark and interest rates that are almost at a historic low, as evidence of a fundamental shift in industry's favour. Destocking, which suppressed demand through the winter, also seems to be over.

But whether all these circumstances will add up to a surge that will make up for the losses of the last six months is a subject of heated debate among economists. Official forecasts for this year's overall growth rate have been revised downwards several times, to a paltry 0.5-0.9 per cent.

Next year's performance will be crucial. Anything less than the 2 per cent forecast by the government would leave a large shortfall in revenue, thwarting German efforts to meet the Maastricht criteria for European Monetary Union.



CITY DIARY
JOHN WILLCOCK

A black day for white tie at Lord Mayor's banquet

The Lord Mayor's dinner at the Banqueting House for the Chancellor and the City's great and good will never be the same again. The organisers have dropped the traditional requirement for white tie from next week's function, and henceforward guests will dress in the much less fancy, but more convenient, black tie.

Sources say there was a mini-rebellion by City bigwigs, sick and tired of the time taken to hire the white tie outfit, and then to put the outfit on, shirt studs and all. Whatever next - chicken in the basket washed down with pints of Boddingtons? It is certainly bad news for Moss Bros, which rents the gear out. It claims the slack will be taken up by guests hiring black tie.

But surely many own their own black tie gear? A Moss Bros spokesman said: "We find that quite a lot of business people don't own black tie suits - like politicians, their waist sizes expand and contract at a rate of knots, so they prefer to hire a suit each time." Ken Clarke's waistline to contract? Perish the thought!

Business people should have at least "a swift hit" at lunchtime. Forget that fizzy mineral water. Changes in drinking habits have hit the brewing and pub trade hard in recent years, says John Young, chairman of the South London brewer Young's. "We have had a good year in difficult trading circumstances but it would have been better had

ING Barings has sent us a news release on a forthcoming seminar in London and Edinburgh to discuss investment opportunities - in Singapore. The meetings will be organised by the Singapore Stock Exchange. I was trying to think of a suitable slogan for the seminar: How about: "Your investment can go down by £800m as well as up." Considering Barings' former investment in Nick Leeson's activities in Singapore, this must be the ultimate triumph of optimism over experience.

	COMPANY RESULTS	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Amico (F)	17.3m (19.3m)	1.75m (1.80m)	18.5p (18)	4p (10)	
Calypso (F)	161m (157m)	0.83m (0.68m)	12.6p (11.4p)	5.5p (-)	
Hawker (F)	- (2)	20.6m (37.1m)	-13.4p (-10.4p)	7.5p (7.5p)	
CMG International (F)	45.4m (40.3m)	-14.0m (-12.0m)	-18.4p (-8.8p)	nil (-)	
Northern Investors (F)	- (1)	0.42m (0.36m)	9.20p (8.19p)	7p (6p)	
Powershop (F)	251m (187m)	36.0m (25.0m)	30.5p (25.0p)	9.2p (8.1p)	
Rex (F)	1.05m (950m)	70.4m (58.3m)	16.59p (13.7p)	6p (5p)	
Shanks & Neffs (F)	11.4m (12.6m)	18.5m (14.5m)	8.89p (4.29p)	3.8p (-)	
Stevens Inds (F)	37.3m (34.2m)	23.2m (20.2m)	16.4p (13.2p)	9p (8.5p)	
J Waddington (F)	299m (250m)	11.9m (53.3m)	7.45p (4.28p)	8.4p (5.7p)	
Variable Water (F)	580m (549m)	162m (142m)	72p (65.4p)	31p (28.8p)	
Young & Co's Brewery (F)	73.9m (72.2m)	5.23m (5.1m)	26.67p (27.1p)	7.25p (-)	
Alpha Cellulose (F)	350.4m (359m)	42.1m (50.3m)	5.75p (7.25p)	2.88p (2.5p)	
Alpha Metals (F)	35.5m (35.8m)	1.3m (1.8m)	3.4p (3.0p)	1.3p (1.35p)	
Asset Holdings (F)	52.6m (47.5m)	19.5m (51.8m)	55.8p (49.8p)	nil (-)	
Capitol Group (F)	8.85m (7.15m)	1.31m (1.11m)	9.48p (6.55p)	4p (-)	
Crabtree Group (F)	19.93m (14.68m)	0.93m (1.81m)	2.88p (2.82p)	3.75p (3.75p)	
De La Rue (F)	723.2m (747.1m)	147.3m (146.6m)	50.50p (55.10p)	23.75p (23p)	
EMAP (F)	705m (547.1m)	78.2m (63.9m)	24.5p (22.2p)	11.2p (10.75p)	
MEPC (F)	- (-)	57m (60.3m)	11.5p (11.5p)	5.25p (5.25p)	
National Grid (F)	1.95bn (1.13bn)	616.5m (610.0m)	25p (25.8p)	25p (25.8p)	
Owen & Riddiford (F)	23.97m (23.51m)	0.29m (0.73m)	1.18p (32.25p)	nil (-)	
RTT Capital Partners (F)	- (-)	4.5m (-1.1m)	1.5p (-1.21p)	1.65p (1.55p)	
Robert Wrenn (F)	146.3m (107.9m)	8.62m (7.02m)	8p (7.38p)	3.1p (2.75p)	
SEB (F)	3.24m (2.85m)	3.02m (2.74m)	2.27p (2.25p)	0.65p (0.65p)	
James Smith Contractors (F)	4.46m (3.52m)	1.62m (1.25m)	8p (10.5p)	5.61p (5.19p)	
St Helens (F)	11.95m (10.65m)	1.82m (1.25m)	8p (10.5p)	2.35p (2.25p)	
St James's Place Capital (F) (-)	47.6m (20.4m)	13.7p (5.7p)	3.3p (3p)		
Thomas Water (F)	1.18m (1.17m)	32.4m (20.0m)	50.7p (71.3p)	4.2p (3.25p)	
WED (F)	390.4m (354.8m)	29.6m (19.1m)	10.2p (9.2p)	4.3p (3.5p)	

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sport

Rough ride lies ahead for Walton

Golf

TIM GLOVER
reports from Merion

One of the perks of sponsoring a tournament is that you get to play in the pro-am, usually with the professional of your choice. Thus, for the Alamo English Open which starts here at the Forest of Arden course today, one or two of the car-rental company's executives teed off yesterday with Philip Walton, the defending champion and Ryder Cup hero.

However, there were some red faces at the red-letter day as Walton, unimpressed with the condition of the course, declared: "The pro-am should have been called off." For the most part, the European Tour has been bevelled with wretched weather this season, but yesterday, the Forest of Arden was bathed in sunshine.

Walton's argument was that the pro-am (a vital source of income to the tournament) should have been sacrificed to protect the vulnerable greens. Not only are they prone to spike marks, but, horror of horrors, the amateur players neglected to repair their pitch marks.

"None of them do," the Irishman said, incredulously. "Not the guys I played with anyway. I just went round on my hands and knees all day. I was like the pheasants out there, plucking away."

As pheasant pluckers go, there are few more pleasant than Walton, whose victory here 12 months ago, when he defeated Colin Montgomerie in a sudden-death play-off, helped to propel him into the Ryder Cup team. At Oak Hill, in Rochester, the Dubliner, of course, secured his place in history by defeating Jay Haas on the last hole to seal Europe's triumph.

The year so far has been an antinomix for Walton, who has missed more cuts than he has

made. "You shouldn't dwell on the past," he said. "The trouble is I'm not making any putts. I'll only change my putter when I break it." He might be testing its mettle this week, and if the Forest of Arden cuts up rough, Monty will be in the dock.

As part of his contract with Marriott, the owners of the course, Montgomerie has made a few changes. For one thing, the rough is much heavier than normally witnessed on the Tour, but it should help to accustom Monty, and others who are playing in the US Open next week, with the sort of conditions they can expect to encounter in Oakland Hills, Detroit.

"The course looks fabulous and plays like a tournament course," said Montgomerie, who finished runner-up in the Deutsche Bank Open in Hamburg last week. "It is as tough a layout as we will find in Europe. People are blaming me for it. You have to hit the fairways, that's paramount."

"It serves a good purpose for the US Open and that's the whole point. My amateur partners found it very difficult, but this course has not been set up for amateurs." Even some of the pros are about to discover that to win the Alamo will take a sieve mentality.

■ Lancashire's Paul Eales will be joining Europe's challenge in the US Open after coming through the qualifying rounds in America at the third attempt.

Eales, who missed out by a single shot last year, scored rounds of 72 and 72 at Tenafly, New Jersey, to qualify for Oakland Hills with one stroke to spare. However, the former Open and US Masters champion Sandy Lyle, taking part in a qualifying competition for the first time since his days as an amateur, failed to get through. His fellow Scot Andrew Coltart abandoned his attempt to qualify after going to the wrong course.

New South Wales

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said. "We were pressing them

right up to the final whistle. We competed to the end and dug deep in defence. There is more self-belief and we are building in confidence."

Feared that Sunday's 69-30 hammering at the hands of ACT would see Wales crumble again were dismissed with a second-half performance that will have done morale a power of good. "We fought back with pride and character, though we again got over eager on a couple of occasions and we need a bit more control," Bowring said.

"We have got to cut down on unforced errors because when you lose possession here, they punish you severely. But there was an improvement in our quality of play. We are running in tries and creating other chances."

The latest injury worries for Wales centre on flankers Emrys Lewis (neck) and Gwyn Jones (groin).

But Jones, playing his first game of the tour after recovering from hamstring trouble, dismissed any suggestion he would be ruled out of the international, where his speed to the breakdown will be crucial.

"I was feeling a bit stiff, so I came off as a precaution," he said.

Wales left it too late to give NSW a go, a 14-point deficit after 33 minutes leaving them with too much to do. But after a solitary Arwel Thomas penalty in the first half, they improved considerably on the resumption. They scored two excellent tries - from centre Nigel Davies, who had a marvellous match and the ever-alert winger Ieuan Evans - to match NSW try for try.

However, they know they cannot afford to be as generous

against the Wallabies on Saturday, NSW fly-half Tim Wallace kicking his side to victory with five penalty goals.

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SPORT



THE LONG ROAD TO WEMBLEY

Guy Hodgson meets the man in charge of the Championship

30

Christie's coach adds to Olympic speculation

Athletics

MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Linford Christie's coach, Ron Roddan, yesterday added his voice to those suggesting that the Olympic 100 metres champion will defend his title next month. Christie may not have committed himself to running in Atlanta, but this week there have been heavy hints from those closest to him, including training partners Colin Jackson and Frankie Fredericks, that he will go.

Roddan, who has guided Christie's career for 12 years, acknowledged that the 36-year-old sprinter was reaching the end of an illustrious career, but suggested the attractions of a final Olympic challenge were too strong to ignore.

"Linford is enjoying his running more now than he has been for a long time," Roddan told BBC Radio Four's Today programme. "This is likely to be his last year at the top level and I think he will go out doing the things he loves to do."

Asked if Christie was afraid of failure, Roddan replied: "He has nothing left to prove. He has shown over the last 10 years that he is one of the top sprinters in the world and one of the best athletes this country has ever produced."

Jackson, who trained alongside Christie, double silver medallist Fredericks and world champion Merlene Ottey in Australia earlier in the year, has also suggested Christie will appear in Atlanta. When asked if the four had gathered in a joint

quest to win gold, the Welshman replied with a smile: "We all want gold. We've all got a similar goal in mind and we are working together for that end." The original idea for the training format, he said, was Christie's.

And Fredericks, a 100m winner in 9.95sec at a meeting in St Denis, near Paris, on Monday, added: "If I were him, I'd be there. Even with one leg he has the ability to do something well. But he's my friend and I won't speak for him."

The British Athletic Federation have not pressed Christie for a decision on Atlanta, saying their senior - and most successful - figure has earned every right to take his time before making an announcement.

So it now appears likely that

the decision will come next week at Britain's Olympic trials in Birmingham, where Christie has said all along that he will compete.

The team is picked immediately afterwards and the selectors need to know - if only out

of courtesy to his domestic rivals - what his intentions are.

In the meantime, Judy Oakes, who achieved the best ever result by a British female thrower at a major championship last weekend, is facing an Olympic build-up without competition.

Oakes, who punted the shot exactly 19 metres at the European Cup in Madrid to finish second behind Germany's world champion, Astrid Kumbernuss, is wary that her event will not feature in any of the

forthcoming domestic meetings this season.

"I have proved that I am a world-class athlete," she said in Madrid. "I was competing against some 21m putters here and I have shown that I am not afraid of them. But what chance have I got if my event is not included?"

The race will take place at the Bupa Games in Gateshead on 30 June, which will be the last chance for any would-be British Olympians to achieve qualifying marks.

Mullally awaits verdict on pitch

Cricket

DEREK PRINGLE
reports from Edgbaston

First Tests are normally vital in deciding the outcome of a series, particularly in a three-match rubber, where scope for manoeuvre and regrouping is limited. It is curious then, that England have chosen to play this first Test at Edgbaston, the scene of their fastest defeat since the war. Their loss here to the West Indies last year took less than seven sessions.

However, the decision has also left England in a quandary over their bowling attack for today's first Test against India. So far, the deliberate decision to let players know their role as soon as possible has been laudable. That fact that none of the three potential debutants will know their fate until later this morning is therefore out of character and seems to suggest that the pitch has not quite lived up to its pre-match billing.

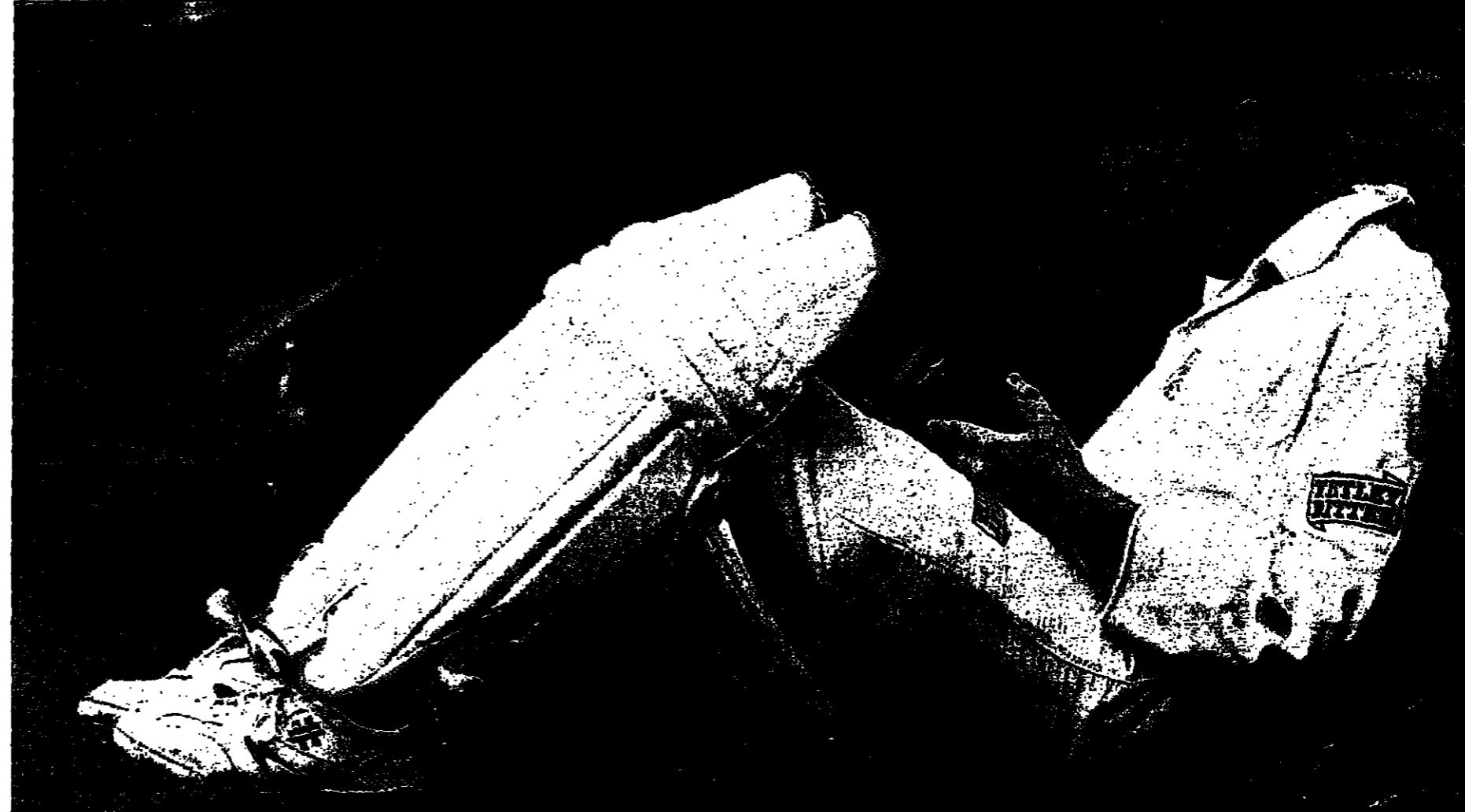
A few days ago, reports of a well-grassed surface prompted talk of an all-seam attack. Yesterday, that had all changed and spin was the word on everyone's lips - including those of the England captain - after a clos-

er inspection revealed a well-cracked pitch, which will produce the sort of uneven bounce which might explain why Warwickshire have won the Championship more often recently than, say, Lancashire.

If Min Patel, Kent's Bomber, left-arm spinner, does make his debut - and he now looks certain to do so - Ronnie Irani, at the expense of John Crawley, is almost bound to join him and will bat at six. It is a tactic the England captain confirmed at yesterday's press conference, though it was not fully endorsed by his coach, David Lloyd.

More difficult altogether will be the choice of third seamer between Peter Martin and Alan Mullally. That decision is unlikely to be made until this morning when the selectors have had another chance to assess the pitch.

They may also, given India's two spinners, consider Mullally's propensity to run on the pitch. With his first follow-through stride landing about seven feet down around off stump, he not only risks censure from theumpires - which can lead to a ban from bowling for the rest of the innings - but will also be creating a custom-made dustbowl for Anil Kumble, India's match-winning spinner, to exploit.



Study in concentration: Mike Atherton, the England captain, complete with camcorder at Edgbaston yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

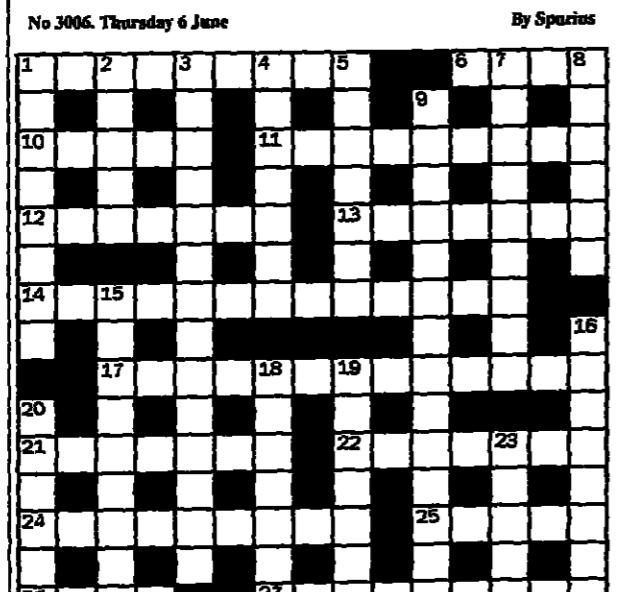
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Wednesday's solution



No 3006. Thursday 6 June

By Sprattus

1 Dashing swordsman's first impression (9)
6 Sour fruit Carthage family mostly rejected (4)
10 Declaration of independence inhibited by a time check? (5)
11 Prejudice, a spirit unfavourable for introduction of voting reform (5, 4)
12 Vehicle with poor roadholding in Lewis? (7)
13 Manage to link account with energy consumed by industrial premises? (7)
14 Bill may have him as a sponsor? (7, 6)
17 Street features reflected in truck windows? (7, 6)
21 Diversionary target offered by a race meeting? (7)

22 Sensible people pick such things up? (7)
24 Compensations, dear, somehow upper-class types will accept (3-4)
25 A manuscript found beside old papers? (5)
26 Male journalist gives notice (4)
27 Telephotography attempts unlikely to succeed? (4, 5)
DOWN
1 Flight initially detained in South America affording view from Rio? (8)
2 Plug, one fitted into ionising socket for navigational aid (5)
3 County air which will soon have us on our feet? (8, 6)
4 Means whereby one primarily microwaves vegetables? (7)

5 Rubbish originally brought into service station? (7)
7 Fine dust could be an oxide (4, 5)
8 Request risky investment should cover a group of currencies? (6)
9 Lack of vision, whilst the rest of us have dreams? (5-9)
15 Join with others in badly treating English? (9)
16 When bishop's office has to accept Sunday School estimates? (8)
18 Timid fellow gets a load of abuse? (7)
19 German boy entertained by politician's song? (7)
20 Like in feeble child, poor thing? (6)
23 Cheer given by supporter having volume reduced? (5)

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Donis decides on Blackburn

Football

ANDREW MARTIN

Atherton, who watched the first ball of last year's Test from Curly Ambrose's whistle clean over his head, would not be drawn on the current pitch, which has been cut several strips away from last year's lethal surface.

"It looks reasonable to me," he quipped yesterday. "Though people have been staring at it like it's an ancient relic or something. It's there. We've got to play on it. So there's no point in getting yourself worried about it."

Apart from his own lack of

form, Atherton, after the comprehensive victory in the one-day series, has far less to worry about than his opposite number, whose popularity back home has reportedly plummeted in the wake of Navjot Sidhu's sudden and acrimonious retirement.

It is a big Test for both captains, and depending on the result, one that could begin to bring further judgement on both their futures as leaders.

"I never let these things affect me," said Azharuddin, whose batting touch in recent

games is once again approaching its sublime best. "I'm not hassled. It's just that we didn't play well in the Texaco series. Anyway we're looking forward to the Tests. They are very important to us as we don't play many. But we need to apply our mind if we are to play well."

That could prove difficult especially after a two-year diet of one-day cricket where techniques and concentration can fall foul of bad habits. That said, India still possess a formidable middle-order with Sanjay Man-

jrekar, Tendulkar and Azharuddin likely to prove the biggest obstacle to an England victory.

India have only ever won three Tests in England and although none were at Edgbaston, England's batsmen cannot afford to be complacent. As a pair of new ball bowlers, Javagal Srinath and Venkatesh Prasad have greatly impressed and, despite finishing on the losing side after the one-dayers, outbowled their English counterparts.

Hot weather is forecast, which will suit India who did not

look entirely at ease in the blinding cold May. It will also help dry the pitch and India's spinners Kumble and Suresh Raina - the latter an all-rounder who will probably bat at six - should enjoy that as no doubt will those who bought tickets for Edgbaston's lost weekend last year.

ENGLAND v INDIA, First Test, Edgbaston, to-day: M. Atherton (capt), N. Venkatesh, R. Srinath, S. Prasad, V. Venkatesh, G. Srinivasan, D. G. Corlett, M. M. Patel, P. Martin, A. D. Mullally, C. L. Tait, V. Venkatesh, A. D. Patel, S. Venkatesh, R. Mongia (bat), J. Srinath, A. Kumble, B. K. Prasad, R. Whistnaby, R. Dravid, S. Manjrekar, D. G. Harmer. TV replay: Sunday 11 June.

Published by Newspaper Publishing PLC, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and printed at Mirror Colour Print, St Albans Road, Watford.

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